SHAMANISM FROM EAST TO WEST

By

Carla Corradi Musi

Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

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Preface

The universities of Europe and the world have few expert researchers of the cultures of the Finno-Ugric peoples. Even fewer is the number of those who choose this difficult subject even though they do not themselves come from one of these peoples. The first difficulty is that international literature has less data about these small nations, precisely because of the language problem: thus it is not an easy task to carry out Finno-Ugric comparative research. Tha author of this preface has set out on this difficult track.

Carla Corradi Musi is senior lecturer at the University of Bologna, where she teaches Finno-Ugric philology. She graduated in 1971 in Classics with a thesis on Hungarian language and literature at this famous institution which is the oldest university in Europe. Later she specialized in Modern Philology and did research on 14th century Mantuan-Hungarian relations. Since the mid-1970s she has published over eighty extensive studies, among them a number of books giving brief descriptions of the history and culture of various Finno-Ugric peoples (those of the Volga, the Perm, the Baltic and the Finnish nations). She has regularly participated in conferences on Hungarian and Finno-Ugric studies where she has always presented interesting and previously unresearched topics. In the last decade she has frequently touched on the problems of shamanism. This volume is a collection of the English translations of some studies, most of which were originally published in Italian. The activity of Carla Corradi Musi has acted as a bridge between East and West.

The first short piece connects the problem of the Finno-Ugrian double soul with shamanism. The author's initial idea is that the idea of the double soul is a basis for the motif of the soul journey which plays a central role in Siberian shamanism. The following study examines the meanings of two important symbols in Eurasian shamanism, that of fire and of water. Fire is the symbol of power while water is the instrument of initiation, of shamanic rebirth in shamanic rituals. The basic idea of the third study is that Finno-Ugric shamanism and European mediaeval magic may be compared at a number of points. Indeed, this has also been suggested by Carlo Ginzburg and also, some years earlier by the Hungarian scholars Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs and promises to become an interesting trend of research for the future. The author of this book provides a quantity of new data which suggest diverse fields of research requiring many years of hard work. Among these, for example, is the connection between the Sampo (the magic mill of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*) and the Grail. The parallels between the blacksmith and the shaman would deserve a complete book to compare the vast range of literature on the subject.

In her study on tree worship, which is one of the longest, the author lists a number of facts which confirm her thesis according to which some beliefs, symbols and mythological motifs can be related to the mythical-ritual scenario of the Siberian and Finno-Ugrian shamanic area.

In another chapter, writing about Western European animism, Corradi Musi compares several creatures of the natural world, in the shamanic area and in the area of animism in Western Europe. The author states: "it is clear, however, that Western and

Eastern Europe were, from the most distant past, much closer to each other than could be imagined at first sight". One of the proofs of this might be that cultural elements, myths and beliefs spread along the 'trade routes of Baltic amber'.

In the essays which constitute the backbone of the volume, the author uses old sources to quote data which refer to the Finno-Ugrians. Some of these have long been known to researchers, others, especially those which were written in Latin and Italian, were hardly known to the wider public. Thus it is due to Professor Corradi Musi of Bologna that international research can now gain access to them, since this is the first time they have appeared in English. She quotes interesting data from 13th century chronicles written in Latin, quoting, among other things, the Hungarian *Képes Krónika* (Picture Chronicle).

In another piece she refers to important data from the historical writing of Olaus Magnus *(Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus)* which, as early as the 16th century, demonstrates a number of parallel features in the belief systems of European and Siberian peoples.

One interesting chapter of the book talks about vampirism and shamanism, and the co-occurrence of the two in the European literary culture of the mid-18th century. The author lists all the data which are related to vampire beliefs and the notion of blood as *vis vitalis*.

Hungarian readers, especially those who are philologists and well-versed in Hungarian folklore, will smile when they read the most absurd 'data' about supposed Hungarian vampires, whose very names reveal that they are not Hungarian but come from one of those nationalities which lived on Hungarian territory before the reduction of the country's size as a consequence of the Trianon treaties of 1918. Among these nations belief in vampires was strong while it was completely absent in Hungarian folk mythology. Béla Köpeczi discussed this fact in much detail in a study written in 1981, where he shows that the Dracula myth was mistakenly associated with Hungary, since it is a part, in fact the best known story, of Roumanian folklore. As for the shamanistic stratum of Roumanian folk beliefs, this is the subject of one of Mircea Eliade's less well known articles, inserted also in the volume *Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions.*

One of the most valuable chapters in this book is the one which describes an early 19th century work of 'encyclopaedic ethnology', Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno*, more precisely those parts of it which refer to Finno-Ugric peoples. Research has not yet taken advantage of these early data, even though they contain a quantity of excellent observations. Thus Ferrario noticed the sharp distinction made between male and female idols and, generally, between ritual roles, among the Ostyaks, and the special veneration granted to holy trees. The description of the reindeer sacrifice by this 19th century ethnographer is so realistic that one wonders how this was possible if not from personal experience.

In her next essay the author surveys two other 19th century publications, involving a good deal of useful data regarding Siberian shamanism. F. de Lanoye published a book in Paris in 1868 in which he describes the observations made by Éva Félinska, a lady of the Ukrainian nobility and by the famous Finnish researcher Matias Aleksanteri Castrén among the Ob Ugrians. The other book contains a travel account by Stéphen Sommier which was published in 1883. In this he describes a summer's journey during which he visited the Ostyaks, the Samoyeds, the Zyryans, the Tartars, the Kirgiz and the Bashkir. If we consider the obstacles that need to be overcome for a journey like that even in our day, it appears an almost incredible achievement for a hundred years ago.

The volume is concluded by two essays in which the author has collected all the data that refer to elements which can be compared in the shamanism of certain Finno-Ugric (particularly Ob Ugrian) peoples and of North American Indians. It must be noted that this is a ground-breaking phenomenon in comparative studies and many might find its conclusions too daring but in fact Corradi is not alone in her ambitions since many people today are already working on this topic. (Otto J. von Sadovszky's comprehensive work on this subject was published by Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, in 1996 under the title *The Discovery of California — A Cal-Ugrian Comparative Study.*)

Even more conspicuous are parallels between the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians in terms of their folklore relating to death and nature. Corradi Musi finds a number of examples in this area too. Thus, for example, both groups imagine the other world, the kingdom of the dead to be on the far side of water. It is worth mentioning the infinite calm with which both the Ob Ugrians of Siberia and the North American Indians face death: this is an important mark of both cultures. It is characteristic of both peoples and their culture that man is believed to have two souls and that the custom of double burial was also practised in both places, in spite of the great geographic distance separating them.

Carla Corradi Musi's writings are examples of the possibilities inherent in *comparative* research in the traditional sense, but they also serve as a warning that *contrastive* studies must also gain ground in the future.

Budapest, 30th September, 1996

M. Hoppál

Introduction

The shamanism of the ancient Finno-Ugric and Siberian peoples was a systematic ensemble of beliefs and ritual practices mainly connected with their ethnic identity.

However, through pre-historic contacts, both direct and indirect, it left traces going back to the distant past even in Western European culture. Since the primordial period, shamanism reached present California along with those ancestors of the North American Indians who were Finno-Ugric in origin.

The echoes transmitted by shamanism over such a wide area constitute an extremely interesting phenomenon not only for the past of pre-Colombian America but also of Eurasia. It is clear that the ancient Uralic and Indoeuropean peoples were more in touch with each other than one would initially have imagined. Certain elements in the traditions, myths, legends and sagas of Western Europe, which recall the magic ritual scenario of shamanism, are the result of a long process of cultural transmission which had already started in the prehistoric era.

"Double" and "Passage" in Euroasiatic Shamanism

The "Doubling" of the Finno-Ugric and Siberian Shaman's Soul

It was only the worker of sacred acts, i.e. the shaman, who was the most expert practitioner of the "doubling" of the soul with the purpose not of acquiring esoteric knowledge, but, by means of the activating of "renovatio", of reinforcing his own "second" personality (Lapassade 1976: 187–188). In public séances, during which he put himself in harmony with the forces of the universe, he managed to draw the public in an emotional way into the total "immersion" of a reality which was otherwise invisible. His trance captured the participants collectively in a mythical-ritual experience, which was completely exclusive of the vision of the shaman's world. The risk that the shaman ran made the journey of the "second soul" into realms beyond this world of the ancestors and divinities a much more emotional experience. Dance, music and song were not the elements responsible for releasing ecstasy, as Claude Lecouteux maintained (Lecouteux 1992: 53). It could occur even in the absence of apparent movement or sound. Dance, music and song were forms of art serving as aids and constituted the framework on the ritual stage of the trance, a supreme spectacle of the artistic *opus* expressing the link, which was otherwise inexpressible, between life and death-rebirth, between the so-called complementary opposites which made the universe alive and dynamic. The metamorphoses of the shaman into animals, which gave form to his totemic "double" by means of masks and costumes, reproduced the ancestors of the original mythical scenario, and were in their turn identified in divinities. The worker of sacred acts in ecstasy represented the temporary projection on earth of supernatural power, of which he became the extraordinary depository since he created in his spectators a very particular pathos. When doubled in perfect form, the "second soul" of the shaman during this radical experience assumed the characteristics of a pure spirit, freed from all earthly contamination, but capable of protecting his own tribe as "medicine-man", prophet or psychopomp. His "living soul" or vital soul (his breath), remained in his body, maintained the links with the terrestrial dimension and made the distance between the shaman and eventual spectators shorter, while the "second soul", also called "free soul" or "spirit shade", moved upwards or downwards in an extrahuman, supernatural or divine dimension: the shaman's two souls had to remain in reciprocal harmony even though their tasks were different, during a difficult play of correspondences which did not allow loss of control. Human reality and fantasy had to live side by side until the ecstasy became activated as a work of art, both when it occurred in private form and when it was celebrated in public. In the latter case, if we wish to take into particular consideration the social aspect of religion, which for Marcel Mauss is actually an essentially collective phenomenon (Mauss 1980: 90), ecstasy became a "religious" (in the sense of *religans*) rite, which tied the participants emotionally in its representation of the "face of the invisible" (Marotti 1984). The magic

technique of the shaman and his assistants, which generated a collective "feeling", was in fact a form of art, the latter being "*una* tecnica magica" ("*one* magic technique"), during which the repetitions responded "ad esigenza di ritmo, di simmetria" ("to the demands of rhythm and symmetry") (Seppilli 1971: 210–211).

On the other hand the "double" of the beneficent worker of sacred acts par excellence was distinguished by his capacities during trance, which were by nature not only paranormal but also divine. Even Claude Lecouteux, who was so much in favour of interpreting many manifestations of magic in Western paganism as the result of the concept of the "double", with particular reference to the Germanic-Scandinavian area, could not fail to recognise the exclusive characteristic of the shamanic trance of the so-called "professionals of ecstasy", as were the Lappish shamans too whom he took into particular consideration, going back to available sources beginning with ancient sagas (Lecouteux 1992: 48-53). Even if the scholar maintained that it is "la conception païenne de l'âme qui donne la clé de la compréhension du Double" ("the pagan idea of the soul which offers the key to an understanding of the Double") in numerous parallel traditions, he had to emphasize that "tous les hommes ne savent pas qu'ils possèdent un second moi" ("all men do not know that they possess a second I") (Lecouteux 1992: 48, 57). In the shamanic field, however, everyone was aware of the existence of his own "double". The system of beliefs belonging to shamanism itself was based on the concept of the "double". The complementary nature of the opposites which constituted the structure of magic traditions in the Finno-Ugric area, such as life-death and good-evil (Hoppál 1978: 369–372), reproduced that of the two souls, one mortal, the other immortal, the one necessary to the other during earthly existence, even if they were very different from each other. In shamanic ecstasy the "second soul" was linked from the macrocosm with the "first" which lived in the microcosmic dimension: the vertical nature of the ascent or descent of the immortal soul along the "shamanic tree", which reproduced the archetypal "tree of life and death", in a state of continual renewal, was in complementary opposition to the horizontal axis along which the "living soul" lived. The vertical movement of the "spirit shade", which could pass from the realm of the hereafter to that of the gods, even if it was dangerous, involved a renewal which was due to the journey in an extra-terrestrial dimension, while the horizontal one recalled the river which flowed into the country of the dead: the first was an emblem of vitality, the second of a static state, of death.

During ecstasy the immortal soul lived in a cosmic supernatural dimension, while the mortal soul was imprisoned in the body. The "living soul" in its condition of passivity and the "spirit shade" (even if detached from the body and therefore dead to daily experience) in their creative role represented at the same time in trance, through destroying all temporal space, two complementary and opposite aspects of human existence which is to be understood as an intercalation of life and death in an everlasting continuity. The shaman in ecstasy, by living at the same time the mortal earthly experience and that of the immortal extra-terrestrial one, thanks to his "doubling", gave new strength to his own "second soul" in conformity with the internal logic of shamanism, with its unmistakable aspects.

The magic manifestations of the "alter ego" of the workers of sacred acts in Western Europe in certain cases seem to reveal connections with shamanic "doubling".

It is difficult, however, to establish which phenomena of zooanthropy in the West were not the result of the identification of a creature in an animal-spirit (which seems to eliminate the concept of "double" attributed to the soul in shamanism), but of a true and real "doubling" of the soul in the shamanic sense which, let us not forget, implied a relationship of necessarily complementary opposition between the two souls, their

constant communication, a fine but indispensable connection. Of course, apart from metamorphosis into animals, in Western European paganism there were also other recurring possible visible expressions of the "double" such as the shadow, the reflection and the image.

As far as the "double" is concerned, particularly in the Hellenic field, the influence of shamanism was felt in a special way in the ecstatic technique of the Bacchants and in the legend of Orpheus. According to Claude Lecouteux, Scythian shamanic concepts regarding the soul were transmitted through Thessaly, the land of magicians (Lecouteux 1992: 182). However, the "shaman's theatre" (Mazzoli 1989: 47–50), which was certainly dominated by the worker of sacred acts in trance as actor, spectator and director who did not lose control of the situation, could not be recreated in a society which was not shamanic in its beliefs.

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Notes on Fire and Water in Rites of "Passage" in Euroasiatic Shamanism

Fire and water played an important part in the so-called rites of "passage" in Euroasiatic shamanism. Fire, with its light and heat, was the symbol of the vitality and the power of the sun. The "internal heat" of the shaman in ecstasy (Eliade 1987: 69–70) was a sign of his increased powers. Water was the symbol of fertility and therefore had an augural meaning. However the sacrality of fire and water also involved a further aspect of their being, the negative and destructive one.

The evident ambivalence of fire and water was in harmony with a corresponding ambivalence present in all practitioners of the sacred, especially in the shaman, but also with the abandoning of one state for the acquisition of another on the part of every being who found himself in the condition simultaneously negative and positive of a "passage", such as birth, marriage and death.

The means of communication between the world of the living with that of the dead among the Samoyed Yuraks (Nenets) were the Great Waters beyond the three rivers: one was full of pieces of wood, the other of shamanic drum fragments and the third of the spinal columns of dead shamans. In order to accomplish this "passage", the dead man's soul needed the help of a shaman (Eliade 1985: 236). Among the Goldi tribes (Eastern Tungus) of the Lower Amur, the spirit of the deceased, carried by a stag shaman, before reaching the village of the dead, had to direct itself to the source of a river and, after crossing a range of mountains and a forest, and another high mountain, had to sail over a dangerous marsh and cross over a torrent, on whose banks grew a beautiful forest forming the border with the land of the dead (Halifax 1982: 240). Among the Turkish populations of Southern Siberia the shaman and the relatives of the deceased let a raft containing the immortal soul of the deceased go down the river: this soul, or *üzüt*, thus travelled along the "black way" until it reached the hereafter (Marazzi 1984: 166).

As far as the worker of sacred acts was concerned, his ecstatic initiation along the river recalls the sign of predestination for the shamanic vocation of those born with the "shirt", i.e. they were wrapped in the amniotic sac. According to Roman Jakobson and Marc Szeftel in Slav popular tradition a child born with the caul was "predestined to become a supernatural being" endowed with "supreme magical ability" (Jakobson and Szeftel 1966: 343–344). Carlo Ginzburg had already connected shamanic ecstasy and temporary access to the world of the dead with the caul which enveloped the future shaman and with the cloth which covered the face of the deceased (Ginzburg 1989: 248–249). This association is even more significant if we consider that the shaman in ecstasy "hid himself", and his "second soul", now separated from the body, travelled in the world of spirits which were invisible to humans. The Magyar *regösök*, in their Christmas and New Year songs, inspired by the dead, "hid themselves" (behind masks), as is also indicated by the etymology of their name. Furthermore in the ritual practice of "standing to listen" from Christmas to Epiphany, with the purpose of divination, at a crossroads or in a circle, the head or eyes of participants were covered to allow a complete identification with the dead who were believed to return at that period. It is interesting to remember that during the same days in many parts of Europe

masked ceremonies were held to commemorate the dead. In certain cases these ceremonies were repeated near Pentecost (Ginzburg 1989: 166–167). The well-established tradition among some Finno-Ugric peoples of observing precautions with regard to water around Pentecost was probably connected with the conviction of "the return of the dead" in spring, when nature was regenerated. In the same way the various warnings about not using water, which were frequent in popular literature, for example in the Finnish and Estonian areas, were true and proper taboos in honour of the dead.

The link which connected water with the hereafter is also met in the field of totems: some rivers were revered by certain Finno-Ugrians as tribal protectors.

According to the myths of cosmogony, in Finno-Ugric and Siberian shamanism the life of the earth itself was born from water. In one version the universe originated from an egg which broke and fell into water. The origin of this myth, which was well known to the Finns, Lapps and the Komi and, in a modified form, to the Mordvinians, has been connected with the western component of the Baltic group of Finno-Ugrians and seems to be independent from the origin of the myth of the so-called "diving bird" (Napolskikh 1989: 106). It has already been stressed that the latter is not Indoiranian in origin and even less so has a world-wide character. In all probability the myth originated in the heart of the primordial culture of the Uralic, Yukaghir and the majority of the Altaic peoples of Siberia (Napolskikh 1989: 105–111). It is thought that it was the Finno-Ugrians, influenced by the beliefs of the peoples situated in Eastern Asia, who spread the myth in the West – even if the Proto-Slavs were familiar with it. We cannot exclude also a very ancient diffusion of the myth which would have reached the lands of North America, with particular reference to the Penutian peoples of California (Napolskikh 1989: 109–110).

In contrast, but only apparently, to the myth of the creation of the universe by means of water, we find that of its destruction by means of the universal flood, which was well known in the entire Uralo-Altaic area; the latter, in fact, would appear to have made the world, now old, disappear but only to prepare a new one (Eliade 1981: 219–220). It must be viewed in the same way as experiments in alchemy which presupposed for each transformation the reduction of matter into a fluid state (Eliade 1987: 137), a regenerative "dismembering" which recalls that of the shamanic initiation.

In Finno-Ugric popular literature we find the echo of journeys by mediums accomplished by the hero-shaman or by his assistant spirits in animal form along a river in search of a medicine to restore life. In the Udmurt area the shaman candidate, under the guidance of the God of the Sky, Inmar, during his own initiation had to go to the bank of a very large river and dance or leap on the strings of a lyre (Krohn 1908: 147–148).

Traces of female shamanic initiation through water, especially in relation to the reproductive function of women, can be found in popular Finno-Ugric literature. In particular in an interesting Cheremis song, a girl – a future shaman – instead of being left in the middle of a wood, is abandoned in the middle of the water (Vikár and Bereczki 1971: 475), a symbol, like snow, of purification and rebirth to a new life, as can be deduced from the many bear-songs. To absolve them from the guilt of having killed a superior being the Ob-Ugrians in winter threw snowballs at bear hunters, while in summer they sprayed them or ducked them in water (Corradi Musi 1980: 74–75). The same participants at the bear feast purified themselves in the same way from the guilt of having eaten bear meat. In Vogul and Ostyak rites the bear slayers could be subjected to fumigation. Fire had the same magic value as water, as we can witness its use in the Koryak ceremony to assist the soul of the dead bear on its extraterrestrial journey.

The Estonians carried the bride around a tree which had been set on fire while the Mordvinians accompanied her in front of the hearth (Gasparini n.d.: 180), so that her new life began with the aid of the force of this sacred place in the house, a symbol of the centre in its connection with the superhuman beings of the hereafter. It was believed that fire favoured fertility in the Hungarian county of Hont, where young men and girls obtained future married happiness by jumping together over the Midsummer fire (Róheim 1975: 282), which among other things had great apotropaic significance, even with respect to animals and trees.

It is no coincidence that one of the methods for destroying the vampire and its sterility or the fierce werewolf, especially in their more stubborn manifestations, was to burn them. Fire, by cancelling even the smallest bodily remains, allowed the "second soul" now free from evil to reach the kingdom of the hereafter while it waited for a better reincarnation. Together with water, fire became the vehicle of transit even in the rites of "second burial". The Mordvinians, during the practice of these rites, not only washed the bones of the dead – as did other tribes – but also lightly singed them in the "living" flame of a fire obtained by rubbing two pieces of wood together (Gasparini n.d.: 110–111). In such cases water and fire had the identical aim of purifying the bones to ensure their resurrection.

The belief that water was also an element capable of getting rid of evil persisted in the shamanic field. In the travel book of Count Luigi Forni of Modena, in which he writes that in 1829 he went to Hungary to get to know the heart of the Danube plain and the authentic Magyar, we read that an old system for recognizing witches was to immerse suspect old women in water; if they did not sink they were considered guilty and beaten (Forni 1832: 41).

The beneficial properties of saliva were also considered similar to those of water. With regard to this we may recall a specific ritual of blessing of the Cheremis called "spittle" (Corradi Musi 1981: 95) or the spittle of the daughter of the Khan who caused the resurrection of the Buryat epic hero Altan Šagai Hübüün (Heissig 1982: 296) or again the spittle with which the Yakut "medicine-man" dispelled illness (Eliade 1985: 256). Just as water, so did saliva possess evil powers. Šajtan in the Mordvinian creation myth, by spitting on a man who had just been created from a lemon at the hands of Čim-Paz, violated his integrity and made him subject to illnesses (Corradi Musi 1981: 63). The serpent who provoked the death of Lemminkäinen in the *Kalevala* (Lönnrot 1978: 201–202) was born on the waves of the sea from the spittle of Syöjätär.

The close connection between water and fire-sun can also be traced in popular Zyryan tradition. It was a female, the "virgin of the water" in Zyryan folklore who refused to be separated from her comb, symbol of the sun's rays at sunset, as if water could not abandon the sun in its journey of rebirth, and she represented the element of its regeneration. In all probability this virgin, like Kul the so named Zyryan spirit of the water (Corradi Musi 1982: 72), was originally a subterranean being, related to the magic of metallurgy which always had a relationship with fire, also a female element (Hoppál 1978: 382), miraculous in its solar power. The Finno-Ugrians considered the sun also as a female principle, in contrast with what was believed in Greco-Roman and Tartar paganism. Similarly the Siberians personified fire in the goddess Abe (Guillot 1970: 151).

The fact that Zyryan Kul was identified with the god of death, in complementary contraposition with Jen, the god of light and the sky, should not surprise us. Shamanic beliefs about the dead person who had to pass "beyond the water" on his journey of initiation towards the kingdom of the dead arose from the fact that it ensured in such a way a future rebirth on the earth, a new existence in the kingdom of light. In fact the

Zyryans, before abandoning nomadism and practising the burial of their dead, used to throw their dead directly into the water as an offering to Kul.

The fact that the initiatory power of water increased if associated with that of fire was fundamental to the belief found among the Buryats, according to which anybody who drank from a receptacle containing a fossil of the belemnoidea called the "lightning stone" became a powerful shaman (Eliade 1985: 37). This fossil was considered by the Finns, the Permian and Samoyed peoples to be a fragment of the arrow of the God of the Sky. Its powder was used as an ointment for wounds and, mixed with water, was drunk by sick people. The "lightning stone", also called "the rain stone", was also used to pass from a state of illness to one of recovery.

The close relationship between illness, water and the shaman in his function of "medicine-man" is well defined in Zyryan shamanism. The Zyryans in fact thought that whoever was afflicted by an illness because he had broken a taboo concerning the spirits of the water, could be healed only by a shaman capable of travelling across water to obtain the healing of his patient from the spirit. The shaman therefore not only had to have control over fire, but also overcome the obstacles represented by water.

The mythological expression "the water of life" makes its appearance in a significant way in wedding ceremonies. Washing the face and hands in running water was a common ritual for newly weds. The fertilization of women by water is also a part of Finno-Ugric myth. We need only think of the virgin Ilmatar of the *Kalevala* who, tired of her chaste life spent in the regions of the air, decided to let herself be fertilized by the waves of the primordial ocean (Lönnrot 1978: 28–29). The young wives in many Finno-Ugric tribes prayed to Mother Water to have children. Often on their wedding day girls dressed in the bathroom where births also used to take place, the dead were remembered, illnesses were treated and beer, a sacred drink, was prepared.

Furthermore, like fire, water was also important in solstice feasts. In particular on the evening of St. John (June 24th) the Zyryans offered a bunch of buttercups and birch twigs to the spirit of the water of rivers and lakes, after washing themselves with a new brush to ensure good health (Rédei 1978: 236–237). In fact the ancient worship of water, fire and their spirits, including the heavenly spirit of lightning, which made sterile fields fertile, was principally motivated by the fact that water and fire alone were considered "vehicles of life" necessary for every "passage" that was materially or spiritually constructive. The blood of sacrificial victims sprinkled on fire and water answered to the desire to transfer onto them other vital energies and thus increase the power of their mysterious force which was necessary for man and the cosmos.

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Shamanism and Western Europe

Finno-Ugric Shamanism and European Magic (A Proposal for Comparative Research)

Western Magic and Finno-Ugric Magic

Among the scientific studies of magic phenomena documented and extant in Italy, the figure of the shaman, who was not related to the Western European world, does not appear.

An Emilian healer, for example, is never compared with the Siberian shaman. Nevertheless, in the world of fairy tales or magic stories typological comparisons between diverse cultures have been proposed without raising a shadow of doubt as to the methodology followed. With reference to this, Vladimir Ja. Propp, in particular, analyses the connections between Russian and Finno-Ugric fables (Propp 1977).

In Italy also people are beginning to take into consideration the themes of the Hungarian magic story in comparison with the Italian one, as far as the content is concerned. In the same way, transferring our research to the ethnological field we wonder if there might be an affinity between the "medicine-man" of the Finno-Ugric area and Western healers. In fact, this attempt becomes justifiable if we regard shamanism as nothing other than a particular form of magic with well defined ritual components. Therefore it seems clear that we are in a position to compare the folk superstitions surviving in Western Europe with shamanism, even if it is dying out, seeing it in terms of magic elements. Among the Finno-Ugric peoples it symbolized a phenomenon of great importance, in so far as it constituted a form of knowledge, a mechanism of tribal organization, and it remained the same for a long time.

In Western Europe, however, conceptions of magic as well as corresponding myths, due to a progressive change in the social system, were rapidly transformed, becoming weaker and weaker. Certain similarities between European and Finno-Ugric magic with regard to this problem, experienced by peoples all over the world, concerning feelings of empathy with nature, could be explained by so-called "mental categories" typical of humanity. But in a comparative study of shamanism and Western magic, we could easily find many points of contact revealing a common animistic matrix, which are sometimes reflected in parallel myths of great interest. We must point out that the precise relationship between myth and magic has not been made clear.

Mircea Eliade, who has devoted fundamentally important pages to myth, is perhaps dismissing "muddle-headed" Frazer too quickly. In fact, with his vivid perception, he had already realized the very close connection existing between inherited myth and the categories of magic when he wrote: "the tale belonged, in short, to that class of nature myths which are meant to be supplemented by ritual [...] myth stood to magic in the relation of theory to practice" (Frazer 1963: 664).

To demonstrate the fact that magic formulas are the same as myths, we can quote that of an Italian dialect referring to the "Creatéra" (Creatress of the Earth) who still returns every year on March 2nd to Ponte Lugagnano and to Cozzanello in the Parma district. On this occasion in particular the well-known concept of world renewal emerges as a mythical fact which bestows magic power: the "Creatéra" represents heaven which is renewed and in its transformation from myth to magic confers magic power on the person who evokes it:

> Incò l'è 'l primm äd mars / Edman l'è la Creatéra. / Nasa la bübbla sott'ala téra. / Dio nin guarda dala bübbla, / Dala donna mantübbla, / Dal can rabjóz/ E dal'omm petjóz
>
> (Today is the first of March, / Tomorrow is the Creatress of the Earth. / The viper is born under the earth. / May God protect us from the viper, / From the witch, / From the rabid dog, / And from the devil).

The word *mantübbla* does not have its traditional origin verified, however the root *mant* brings us to a possible pre-Christian substratum (Capacchi 1980: 73). The same situation applies to the spirit of shamanism, according to which, for example, the shaman novice, during the initiation ceremony, must die symbolically in order to be born again. On the other hand, the hope of "renovatio" is still present on a conscious level in the sense of "revival" of modern occultism. The description of the hereafter by shamans is comparable with epic themes in popular Finno-Ugric literature, where the healing shaman is substituted by the hero, who needs an afterlife in order to achieve his aims. As a matter of fact, it is possible that tales concerning the hereafter have inspired certain well defined epic themes of the world of the dead (Eliade 1982: 43).

The Sampo and the Grail

With reference to the connection between magic and myth and magic and religion, we agree with what has already been written. The only thing we might add is that research involving the connection between ancient European sagas and those of the Finns and the Celts or the romances of the Grail is becoming increasingly pressing. They are concerned with a more remote past, being for the most part related to Greek mythology, or as Margarete Riemschneider suggests (Riemschneider 1973), with Hittite sagas. The world, the surroundings and the characters of European saga must be considered in a magic rather than a religious light. The heroes of these sagas are the same as those appearing in stories of magic.

Riemschneider, without having paid particular attention to Finno-Ugric culture, has realized that the Sampo of the Finnish *Kalevala* and the Grail of the Arthurian cycle have similar roles, and that Ilmarinen, the great blacksmith of the Sampo, is in fact a shaman. On the other hand she did not succeed in singling out particular shaman initiations with regard to the hero Cu Chulainn (or Cuchullin) and to Perceval, the famous knight of the Round Table (Riemschneider 1973: 94–95). Both of them, like Peredur of the *Mabinogion*, Perceval's counterpart, just like shaman novices, learned their superhuman skills in the loneliness of the forest, under a teacher who taught them, when they were still children, the more mysterious items of knowledge (Agrati and Magini 1982: 215–217; 1982a, II: 197–199; 1982b: 198–199). Thus the Sampo like the Grail, for which respectively the heroes of Finnish and Western epic struggle, represent the conquest of the final purpose, i.e. the achievement of the truth which transcends human limitations and which only the "initiate" is in a position to under-

stand because of his contact with the hereafter. As evidence of the shamanic elements in the Celtic Perceval, or the Finnish Ilmarinen and his companion Väinämöinen, it is sufficient to consider the fact that the mysterious castle of the Grail (Perceval's goal) or the lands of Pohjola in the "Country of the North", i.e. the Land of Darkness, where the Sampo is hidden, are obviously beyond the limits of the world. In the *Kalevala* and the romances of the Grail appear animal forms symbolic of the hereafter, such as the snake and the stag. Väinämöinen is transformed into a totem snake to overcome the dangerous copper net on his return from his shamanic journey. The stag, which is clearly totemic in origin and comes to the aid of Galahad, Perceval and Bohor (Agrati and Magini 1982a, III: 45) in the forest, provides ample parallels in Finno-Ugric mythology. For example, in the representations of the animal with antlers near the "tree of life" of the Proto-Magyar hind or the pregnant elk with six hooves of the Ob-Ugrians, in the Vogul and Ostyak description of the Milky Way as the "Track of the Man Who Pursues the Stag" (based on the totemic "wild hunt" myth which is well known in Finland and in slightly different forms in other parts of Europe), in the beliefs relating to the so-called "Companions of Diana". In European fairy tales also, the idea of the stag connected with the world of the dead is present. For example, in Italy, France, Scotland, Iceland and Southern Slovenia, the story of the hero who, to recover his wife changed into a stag, has to hunt the animal as far as a castle, and inside the castle must overcome dreadful trials (Thompson 1967: 143). Similar events are described in Welsh stories (Agrati and Magini 1982: 51, 58). The most famous prehistoric example of importance of the stag image, which was already known in the remote European past, is that of the so-called "dancing wizard" with his stag horn mask, depicted in the cave of "Les Trois Frères" in the south of France. In Western Medieval beliefs the same hostility which existed between the stag and the snake as between the eagle and the snake among the peoples of Asia in the past is still preserved. In Romanesque art the snake is depicted in the act of biting its tail and makes a circle, which is the image of the life cycle, in which death and life are in continuous change. The symbolic importance of the snake is to be seen in the popular Finnish belief, according to which the domestic snake is sacred. It is interesting to note that in Emilian dialects it is the lizard which is the linguistically tabooed animal (Heilmann 1955: 157) as all sacred animals are tabooed among the Ob-Ugrians. It is not an accident that the witch uses lizard powder in her potions. The image of the stag in connection with death is very old: the connection of the chess-board found by Perceval with the head of a stag, which he had to bring to a strange lady, is related in Hittite mythology to the figure of the god-stag, the god of magic play and of the hereafter (Riemschneider 1973: 30).

A corresponding Celtic god with antlers on his head and a chess-board on his back is Cernunnos, i.e. the "horned-one", a record of whom survives in Europe until the present day as the god of the dead in "black magic". He is often invoked in magic formulas and a magic incense and a perfume are dedicated to him.

The theme of the revolving Sampo as the "pillar of the world", and of the castle in the Hungarian fairy tale which revolves on the claw of a palmiped (totemic), manifesting a reciprocal connection, show the danger to which the shaman hero is subjected on entering the kingdom of the hereafter. Traces of the same phenomenon are preserved in Western mythology, particularly in Celtic saga and in Italian fairy stories. In the story of Perina ("Little Pear"), the palace has a door which continually opens and closes, making entry impossible (Calvino 1991: 49). The "passage" to the hereafter was open only for a few seconds, even in Finno-Ugric cosmology: among the Voguls the tent which separated the world of the living from the hereafter shook so rapidly that it only allowed entrance to the swiftest of birds (Capacchi 1968: 165). The con-

cept of difficult entry is expressed in Ob-Ugrian and European myth in the "trial" of the crossing of a narrow bridge equipped with cutting blades. The same Finnish "Son of the Sun", in order to marry the woman he loves, has to walk on the points of needles without stumbling (Bereczki 1982: 92–94), just as the Votyak shaman has to learn to jump without falling onto the strings of a lyre. Among Finno-Ugrians and Europeans in general, mythical heroes and workers of magic must not only possess innate qualities but also and above all be "initiated".

European magic traditions reflected in myth and corresponding with those of the Finno-Ugric field are numerous: for example, the man with the artificial silver foot seen by the Celtic hero Gawain (Riemschneider 1973: 34) or Amargin, the teacher of Cu Chulainn, with the iron hair (Agrati and Magini 1982b: 13), recall either the figure of the witch with the iron nose of Hungarian fairy tales or the Siberian shamans who sometimes had iron limbs; they deal with nonhuman characters comparable with the devil with the silver nose in the Piedmontese version of the story of Bluebeard (Calvino 1991: 35–40). The idea of a body with one metallic part is very old: we are reminded of the "golden thigh" of Pythagoras. Artificial legs or difficulties in walking are typical signs of initiatory stages. Certain ceremonies also appear to hark back to a North Euroasiatic magic scenario. We are reminded that in the abbey of Cashel in Ireland, the hanging of a sandal over the head of the future king actually symbolized a coronation.

Zooanthropy

The theme of animal spirits representing the souls of the dead and helping the shaman on his journey beyond the world is very frequent in the magic and mythology of the Finno-Ugrians, and appears in Western mythology, traces of which are found in the practice of magic.

Among the so-called "friendly animals" must be listed those which allow the brother of Bluebeard to save the hero himself in the Norwegian version of the story (Thompson 1979: 63), or the codfish, in the Irish fairy story, which helped a certain Jack Dogherty in his ascent to the land of the living (Yeats 1981: 62–74).

Furthermore, among Medieval legends, the "language of the animals" is very widespread and is connected with the secret language of the shaman, acquired by eating the flesh of the animals, which is considered to be the seat of the souls of the dead. In a fairy story told in Sicily (in the province of Agrigento) the hero learns this language by eating the flesh of a viper (Calvino 1991: 867). In popular European magic also, people believed in the power of the powder of certain animals. The totemic nature or, at any rate, the ritual nature of the metamorphosis of the shaman into an animal is present also in the world of European mythology, even if on many occasions the original value of folk traditions has been lost. In the Germanic world, we must remember the transformations of Odin in the hereafter: he was considered to be the master of the magic called *seidr* and thought to be powerful especially in Lappish divination. The shamanic characters of Odin are recognized also by Mircea Eliade, who defines the hanging on the "cosmic tree" Yggdrasil of the magician-poet as an initiation rite of parashamanic nature (Eliade 1982a: 163).

In Northern tradition it happens that magicians and enchantresses very often assume animal forms, and the god Loki behaves like a shaman. The man-animal association and the belief that an animal body lodges a spirit within itself is also widespread among the ancient Germans with respect to the candidates who become *bersekir* ("the

warriors with the bear skin"), also called *ulfhedhnar* ("men with the wolf skin") (Eliade 1982a: 165, 169–173). The totemic character of the animal form assumed by the "free soul" of the shaman in trance, is revealed in the myth of the swan rider Lohengrin (Thompson 1979: 363) which can be easily identified with the sacred swan of the Ob-Ugrians, and with the transformation into a swan of the chief god of the Voguls Mir-susne-χum (Guardian of the World), when he guides the souls of the dead towards the South in the form of a bird.

In Western traditions there exist, even if outside the totemic field, various references to animal-spirits. Consider the black cat in European Medieval folklore, the symbol of the witch, in whom the absolute identity between man and animal is confirmed by the fact that the person who hurts the animal also hurts the human body of the person in question (Di Giacomo 1957: 136); the concept of "double" attributed to the soul of the shaman is therefore cancelled. Sometimes the animal, such as the dog in Northern Italy, represents the soul of the dead person who returns. Already among the Romans the sight of a black dog was a bad omen. In Italy a black cat crossing the street is a bad sign. The cat in Dijon cathedral appears significantly in a position of defence and attack. In Piedmont and in Emilia the screech-owl can announce either birth or death (Artocchini 1979: 351). The ambiguity of the screech-owl in a way illustrates the confusion often present in the Western world between "white" and "black magic", a confusion which is implicit in the idea of magic; on the other hand it can lead us to think of an earlier mythological basis.

In Western superstition the record of "benevolent" animals has mostly died out, but it has not completely disappeared. The eagle of the Roman standards and the wolf skins on the foreheads of the lictors remind us of the tradition and the myth of the shamans, of the ancient Siberian Ket eagle, which remained in various areas, and of the Vogul taboo of the wolf into which the wicked shaman was transformed, as opposed to the bear which is always the seat of the benevolent soul. We must point out, therefore, that a more or less ritual importance must be attached to prehistoric superstitions concerning specific animals. In any case, a very ancient animistic conception is found at least in the tradition that the mouse and the butterfly can be the soul of a sleeping human being or the tradition of elves which can make themselves invisible or assume animal forms and behave sometimes playfully and at other times wickedly, shouting and screaming, dropping objects in the house during the night, in a word, with poltergeist – like infestations. Just as in the Finno-Ugric area they resort to the shaman to exorcize their houses, so in Italy they resort to the necromancer. A necromancer from Padua is also the subject of a maccheronic poem: in the "inspiritata casa" ("haunted house") the necromancer who has to get rid of the source of haunting brings "cum gropis spagum carbonem; zessumque blancum / implentemque domum cum signis atque figuris" ("knotted string and coal; and white chalk, filling the house with signs and forms") (Odassi 1864: 13–14). The belief in elves among Finno-Ugrians is absolutely the same as in Western Europe. The Irish elves, those of the Italian Appennines, the *mazzamauriello* of Southern Italy (Piscopo 1975: 93–95), the *ulda* of Lapland, the *mis-χum* of the Ob-Ugrians as well as the evil spirits of the house of the Zyryans are easily comparable. The "free soul" according to shamanism was able to return to its body only if it was still not decomposed, and the horrible giant Antero Vipunen of the *Kalevala* might represent the case of a shaman whose soul, having entered an animal, stayed there so long that he was no longer able to return into the decomposed body (Kuusi 1980: 289). Lycanthropy, which was widespread among the peoples of the Urals and Slovenia, is still well known today in Italy, such as in the area of the Emilian Appennines. On the other hand, if we take into account the original importance of

metamorphosis into a wolf among the ancient Germans, the Italian expression "viver da lupi" ("live like a wolf") assumes a deeper significance. In Estonia and Finland a large number of stories about man being turned into a wolf survive – the so-called "werewolf". In Lithuania werewolves were regarded as the defenders of the harvest and protectors of the fertility of the fields against evil forces. Their nature was subsequently modified into the terrible man-wolf as a result of the repressive actions of inquisitors.

Shaman and Benandante

The Lithuanian werewolves were justifiably compared by Carlo Ginzburg with the *benandanti* of Friuli who, in their trances, fought against the spells of witches, always for the good of the fields: in one way or another the scholar meets shamanic characteristics such as their trances, their journeys to other worlds and their transformations into animals (Ginzburg 1979: 48–49, 51). The *benandanti* like the shamans possessed powers of divination and they considered themselves born with the "shirt" (with the silver spoon in their mouth), i.e. the amniotic sac: in other words, they were predestined, just like the shamans of the Lapps and the Voguls. While in the case of the Ob-Ugrians shamanic powers were generally hereditary, among the peoples of Siberia and Lapland they were considered as being endowed with an innate power, manifesting themselves in their being born with an extra tooth or with more hair or an extra bone.

The idea of the "quartering" of the "initiate" in shamanic culture which recurs widely in Hungarian fairy stories was precisely to justify the possibility of an extra body element: the procedure of Central Asian origin is encountered among the Yakut people and among the Eskimoes, but it is a very ancient process already widespread among the Greeks. In Italy magic processes like that of the "signing" of distortions are effected not only by people who have acquired the power (quacks and wizards), but also by those who have an inborn power, such as the mothers of twins, twins who have known their great-grandmother, or the so-called "seven months children", i.e. those born after six males or six females, who, according to popular belief, housed within themselves seven spirits (those of the shamanic drum are evidently the inspiration of the latter). The legendary fairies or witches of Celtic myth, both the good and the bad, heirs of the *bonae feminae* of Morrigan and Diana, concealed deformities within their bodies as a sign of predestination. The tradition of an extra or distinctive attribute is noticeable also in the mark of the devil in English witches, and takes the form of an extra nipple on diverse parts of the body, due probably to the disease epithelium (Murray 1974: 85–86).

The phenomenon of the *benandanti* involved men and women, while in the tribal societies of the Finno-Ugric peoples men were predominant. Only a few traces of female shamanism remain among the Voguls, or among the Hungarians in the famous ballad of Anna Molnár, which is believed to be French in origin. In Emilia a semi-dialectal variant of this ballad in the "Valleys of the Horsemen" is preserved in which the "shamanic tree" is reduced to a leafy branch (Conati 1976: 67–74). Traces of female shamanism are also found among the Inuk Eskimo people, but this and other affinities are explained in the light of the so-called "soviet theory" concerning the Asiatic origin of the Inuit Eskimoes (Zavatti 1982: 18).

"Black Magic" and "White Magic"

The systematic persecution by the Inquisition in Italy and in Europe changed the original character of witchcraft. The Roumanian *strigoi* escaped this destructive operation, and also those born with the "shirt", who, with their metamorphoses, night-rides and trances, remained as evidence of what Mircea Eliade defines as a pre-Christian scenario based on their dream journeys and ecstatic ritual battles (Eliade 1982: 89). Our thoughts turn to shamanism in the broad sense of the word and to its complex dream experiences of initiation and to the profession itself. If the *strigoi* sent every kind of misfortune, the *căluşari* of the Roumanians or the "horse-men" practised a countermagic. The initiation group of the *căluşari*, which used to take the oath in a forest on a banner and a woodenheaded horse, is connected with the *táltos* of the Hungarian villages, who was born, according to tradition, of a woman and a horse. It is interesting to note that the violation of a taboo was considered by the Roumanians, similarly by the Finno-Ugrians, to be the cause of diseases sent by an immortal fairy called *zîna* and seven or nine mythological youths, the *sântoaderi*, who used a drum and wore hoods with horse manes (Eliade 1982: 91, 93--94). The fantasies surrounding "black magic", which complement rather than oppose the practice of "white magic", may have been influenced, even before diabolic interpretations, by the legends about the acts of shamans, above all those considered evil. For example, the evil witchcraft of Icelandic sagas show traces of Lappish and North Eastern shamanism, due more to the fact that the journey of the witches is called the "*gand* cavalcade", where the word *gand* seems to refer to the protective shamanic spirit, whether in animal form or not. The "hidden power" of evil which becomes a witch or a dragon expresses, at any rate, the primordial and universal desire to strike the enemy from afar not only with arrows but also with magic: the legend of St. George and the Dragon in European chivalry – the result of pure invention – so well expresses this idea. The hero who fights with the dragon/snake is a common theme with ethnic features in popular Russian epic songs (*byliny*) (Propp 1978: 127, 190–195). In popular belief, not only are divine creatures or witches cannibals, but also towns and buildings in general need a human or animal sacrifice because the angry ghost protects them from enemies: this idea is found among the Hungarian, Mordvinian and Finnish peoples and also in the stories of the Round Table and in Greek legends; there are even traces in the Slav, English and Italian field. For example we can quote the tradition in Emilia of sprinkling red wine in the corners of foundations.

Among shamanic "black magic" practices there is also that of casting the evil eye on men and animals, a phenomenon particularly feared by the Cheremis, the Zyryans and the Votyaks who have many legends about the evil practices of the *vedün*. In Hungary, one of the ways of getting rid of the evil eye from children was to dip the hands of the sick child in hot water – an act performed by the exorcist who then washed the rectum of a cat, the symbol of the witch, with the same water. This water was then partially drunk by the child and partly sprinkled over the lintel (Róheim 1973: 31). In general, among the Finno-Ugric peoples as in Italy, to get rid of the evil eye they resorted to another wizard or witch who knew the procedure of the one who sent it and with equivalent practises annulled the evil action. Among Christians "blessing" was sometimes used against the evil eye, but this was rarely effective. In Italy spittle was often used, as in Germanic and Finno-Ugric folklore and in other countries. In pagan myths of the creation, known by shamans, it is no accident that spittle is always attributed to the cause of evil, and therefore in opposition to the creator. Spittle is obviously effective if it is accompanied by a magic formula, with the "determining" words.

The shaman in his role of "medicine-man" can be compared with the Western healer who believes in the influence of an evil spirit or of a magic object as the cause of illness. It is known that the trance of a shaman is not a passive "possession" like the 19th century "spirit" trance of western form, but a "splitting" which often enables him to tell the audience what his "double" sees on the journey astride the drum, which is his means of transport to the hereafter in the Siberian shamanism (Hoppál 1977: 279).

Sacred Flora

It will be sufficient to note, as far as evidence allows, the distinct connection between the sacred flora of the Finno-Ugric peoples and the large amount of evidence relating to the "cosmic tree" from the Chaldaean and Sumerian area as well as the Christian Medieval sphere. Among the Finno-Ugrians the cult of the tree is so similar to that of the Indoeuropeans that Jean-Paul Roux was led to recognize that "points de contacts [...] existent, en ce domaine, entre les deux civilisations" ("points of contact, in this field [...] exist between the two civilizations") (Roux 1966: 55). On the witches' sabbath their activity was always centred on the tree, into which witches transformed themselves, as we learn in the Tuscan legend "The Knife of the Walnut Tree" (Di Giacomo 1957: 146). In some ballads of Italian and Hungarian literature even the hero is transformed into a tree. In Italian, Hungarian, Roumanian and Serbian legends the hero's wife is transformed into the fruit of a tree. The most celebrated tabooed tree in Europe is the mandragora. Incidentally, we are reminded, out of interest, that the American Wolf archaeological expedition was chased away by the inhabitants of Tosca (Varsi) in the Upper Valceno, because they had uprooted a mandragora tree (Credali 1967: 73–78). Certain herbs are gathered on the night of St. John or the summer solstice which is the magic night par excellence, transferred, due to Christian influence, especially in the traditions of towns, to Christmas Eve.

Divination

The Medieval Neapolitan legend of Virgil as magician who protected Naples from his tomb (Comparetti 1896: 23-66) acquires a deeper significance if we take into consideration the need for contact with the hereafter present in European as well as Finno-Ugric divination. The Germanic myth of Svipdag, as we read in the poem *Grogaldr*, who went onto his mother's tomb to receive prophecies (Seppilli 1971: 505), is reflected in many popular traditions ranging from one in which people in the trials of witches stated that they were able to see the dead because they were born with the "shirt", to the one about the *benandanti* psychopomps of Friuli who risked death if their bodies were abandoned too long by their souls in ecstasy. In the European and Finno-Ugric spheres the ritual of guiding the dead to the tomb reproduces the cosmological symbolism. Cosmogony, anthropogony and death express the creativity of the act of dying which introduces a new way of existence (Eliade 1982: 39).

The popular Italian belief in the prescience of certain animals with regard to natural phenomena recalls that of the Germans of Tacitus' "Germania" where the Germans received prophecies from white horses (Tacito 1995: 214–215, 10), the appearance of which is still considered a good omen in Italy. We are reminded of the white horse totem of the Vogul clan of Mōś, of the Hungarian *táltos* in the comparison with the soul of the sacrificed white horses and of the myths of the magic horse Sleipnir of

Odin, and of the extraordinary Druidic horse in the Irish story of Conn-eda (Yeats 1981: 387–397).

The drum of the shaman diviner in Italian divination becomes a sieve onto which beans fall and, like the beans of the Votyaks, permit the future to be known according to the way in which they fall. In an ancient book published in Parma, Italy, in 1628 there is the following quotation with reference to the diviners:

> gettano le fave [nei setacci] [...] fanno andare attorno i sedazzi [...] per sapere cose future, o passate
>
> (throw the beans [in the sieves] [...] and shake the sieves with circular movements [...] to find out the future or the past) (Viotti and Viotti 1628: 12).

Towards "Indouralism"

The mythological figures of Odin, Perceval, Peredur and Cu Chulainn which correspond widely with the popular traditions of Roumanian *strigoi*, the *benandante* of Friuli, or the Lithuanian werewolf, totemism, vampirism, lycanthropy or ailuranthropy, the beliefs connected with the concept of the "cosmic tree", the systems of divination and other magic phenomena of the Western European world constitute the residue of shamanic influence either on myth or on the magic which derives from it. Shamanism, which in the strict sense is a phenomenon typical of Northern Europe and America, has left its traces not only in the ancient cultures of India, China, Iran, Scythia and Thrace from where it probably spread to Greece but also to the West, perhaps since the late neolithic period. Despite the fact that the Indoeuropeans cannot be considered as people of shamanic vocation, they reveal certain parashamanic characteristics which lead us to think of a common primitive cultural base, or, at any rate, of prehistoric contacts with waves of shamanic Steppe horsemen. On the other hand, even on the linguistic plane, there are those who have replaced the terms "Indoeuropean" and "Uralic" by "Indouralic".

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The Finno-Ugric Shaman-Craftsman and the Western European Magician-Craftsman

The shaman-craftsman and the magician-craftsman of Western Europe, despite differences on fundamental points, in particular in shamanism, are nevertheless considerably similar in the magic-religious field. Unlike the shaman, the European craftsman does not go into ecstasy by means of the splitting of the soul, does not climb up into the "cosmic tree" which unites the earth, the sky and the underworld; he does not need the drum to reach the centre of the cosmos and does not have greater knowledge of the spirits than of the material world. However like the shaman, as we conclude from the statutes of the Medieval corporations, he possesses extraordinary powers of magic and also of healing by natural means, and he is the depository of the secrets of his profession – these must remain as far as possible unchanged; he subjects himself to initiation in order to carry out his proper function (often handed down from father to son) and in order to take part in secret societies (some of these became famous, such as masonry). The English founders of the latter were influenced above all by the members of the building trade.

In Europe and Asia, the first professional artisans in history are the smiths capable of changing stones into metals. When the working of meteoritic iron is added to that of the ferrous minerals of the earth, the art of the smith acquires a new value: the sacred nature of the earth is added to that of the sky, and is present in meteorites. The opening of mines and furnaces involves ritual operations which survive in certain areas right up to the end of the Middle Ages (Eliade 1987: 50). Carrying out excavations means disturbing the mysterious life of the underworld and the spirits which govern it. In the working of metals the smith takes on the role of nature; in the forge the mineral is transformed by fire and quickly brings the new gestation to its conclusion, accompanied by different taboos. Fire does not appear to belong to the earth in its capacity to change the world; it is for this reason that the shaman is, as it were, the "lord of fire": he can control it, walk unharmed on the coals, and produce "internal heat". The smith, as "lord of fire", among the Finno-Ugric and Siberian peoples, coincides symbolically with the shaman: when the two personages are differentiated, the smith possesses a power considered equal or indeed superior to that of the shaman, even if in reality both help each other in turn. The solidarity between the smith and the shaman is clear from various aspects: it is the smith who in certain shamanic initiations, after the dismembering of the body of the candidate, forges the new head from the same (Eliade 1987: 73); it is the smith who creates different ornamental objects which form part of the costume of the shaman; on the other hand, the shaman, when necessary, uses his own skill to heal the smith (Eliade 1985: 501). The smith or specialist craftsman in Asia and Europe, just like the "medicine-man", becomes a participant in the creative force through the initiatory rebirth: the latter does not belong to Nature, but to sacred history. By means of initiation natural man dies and the novice is introduced to the culture which recognizes the work of the civilizing heroes. The initiation of the craftsman and the shaman are distinguished only on the basis of the absence of the ecstatic element in the former, which however is characteristic in the shamanic initiation. Furthermore the initiatory training of the shaman, "the specialist in the sacred" par excel-

lence, constricts him to experiment with the mystic death in a more radical form: the neophyte learns everything that allows him to split himself, to "die" and "rise again" on more occasions, to recognize easily the routes which lead to the sky and the world of the dead. Thanks to his capacity to leave his own body, he can function like a spirit. However the future craftsman candidate or smith, in order to become a depository of knowledge, must in the same way possess the power to free himself from the laws of matter and overcome various trials. One of these is to be reborn from the bosom of Mother Earth; often the candidate must reach the womb of the same and emerge unharmed: this is the case with the Lappish shamans who in trance penetrate the intestine of a great fish (Eliade 1980: 95; Haavio 1952: 124) or in the Finnish myths of the craftsman Ilmarinen who had to come out of the stomach of an old witch by opening a passage with his appropriate tools; again there is the case of Väinämöinen who managed to come out of the womb of the daughter of Tuoni. These myths can also be found in other areas (Eliade 1980: 93–94). Sometimes the womb of a sea monster is the symbol of the hereafter: in the *Kalevala* Väinämöinen, in order to create the first boat, as a true shaman, needs amongst other things to enter the body of the giant Antero Vipunen (Lönnrot 1978: 215–232). It is a question of rites of "passage" and at the same time of regeneration. The rebirth of the smith, like that of the shaman, at times is accompanied by terrible initiatory mutilations, traces of which remain for example in the frightening aspect of the dwarf metal forgers; in Germanic beliefs even the horse which enters the smithy of the blacksmith to be shod, that is "killed" and "revived", becomes blind.

The meeting with the dead is fundamental too in the initiations of Western craftsmen or the adherents of other secret societies, like the *bersekir,* the warriors of Odin (De Vries 1970: 494). Contact with the hereafter is vital for the person who must obtain inside himself a special heating that can generate warlike fury or the capacity to create. The shamans, who are the masters of fire, can actually incarnate the same spirit of fire and emit flames from their bodies during ecstasy. To increase their "internal heat" they are accustomed to drink salt water or piquant herbs (Eliade 1986: 169). The shaman's heat is a sign of power and of new strength. The theme of rejuvenation by means of fire from a furnace is also present in European Medieval folklore (Eliade 1987: 93–94): popular tales preserve traces of a mythical-ritual scenario in which fire performs the function of the initiatory trial and helps to purify and transform.

Gradually the craftsman takes upon himself all the sacred qualities of the smith; on the other hand, in more ancient times the smith was often a builder or carpenter and so on, as some discoveries in the Norwegian and Scandinavian sphere testify – for example the tombstones, difficult to date, in which craftsmen-smiths are represented.

The earthly smith, through his demiurgic capacities, celebrates the apotheosis of the "faber", that is he who "creates" objects. Whether smith, carpenter, architect, musician or magician, he must possess the secret of "construction", of "manufacture". Väinämöinen, the shamanic chanter par excellence, "sings" a boat, that is, needs magic words to create it (Lönnrot 1978: 203–232). "To make" means knowing the magic formula which permits "causing to appear". In Finnish mythology the gods and the heroes know how to achieve the impossible by means of their activities of medium which exalt aspirations to happiness, the potential value of the human word, wisdom and knowledge. The latter becomes in itself a condition of power: to learn the mysterious rules of the forces of nature means to be able to control them. The craftsman-shaman among the Finns is simply a man of knowledge, capable of harmonizing heaven and earth and of expressing divine power: it is characteristic that the term *noita* ("shaman, wizard") is often substituted by *tietäjä* ("wise"). The shaman must know about the

"birth" of the phenomenon which he wishes to eliminate by healing just as the smith knows about the birth of his own objects: both are experts in magic, that is in that invisible connection which exists between natural and supernatural forces. Finnish blacksmiths and craftsmen, just like the greatest shaman-civilizer Väinämöinen, before making an implement for work or a means of transport, resort to the appropriate verbal formula; what is more, in the event of important jobs they seek the help of the shaman to guarantee a successful outcome to their work. Each object produced by man must first be exorcised. Indeed, the blacksmith or the Indoeuropean craftsman, who often collaborates with the gods, has a close relationship with music and song: in particular the palaeo- Scandinavian expression *lotha-smithr* ("craftsman of songs") clearly underlines the magic connection between the profession of the smith and the art of the poet and the musician (Eliade 1987: 87).

The shaman-craftsman of the Finno-Ugric peoples finds its highest poetic expression in the Nordic epics: the *Kalevala* and the *Kalevipoeg*.

In the poem of ancient Finno-Carelian culture it is the mythical blacksmith Ilmarinen who forges the Sampo for the Lady of Pohjola, Louhi, the possession of which secures happiness. He succeeds after three attempts in creating the mysterious talisman which everybody wants to win, i.e. the pivot around which the feats of the protagonists of the *Kalevala* revolve (Lönnrot 1978: 136). Ilmarinen, who is considered at the dawn of civilization a divinity of the air, assumes in the epic the role of an active character who knows how to make extraordinary objects. He is the eternal craftsman possessing control over matter and continually attempts the impossible. He fashions also a golden bride (Lönnrot 1978: 505–512), a new sun and moon which respectively rest on the top of a pine and a fir tree (Lönnrot 1978: 639). It is of no importance that the bride is inanimate and that the stars do not shine: what matters for him is never to submit to inactivity but to continue to experiment. The girl forged by Ilmarinen corresponds with epic cosmogony.

Among the other magic creations of the *Kalevala* we can mention those performed by Väinämöinen who made the first *kantele* (Lönnrot 1978: 540), and then another one of birch (Lönnrot 1978: 583). Apart from the first boat he created another for which Ilmarinen supplied the oars to go in search of the spark which fell from the sky (Lönnrot 1978: 620). Then there is the invention of Ilmarinen who forged a rake to recover for Väinämöinen the lost *kantele* (Lönnrot 1978: 579–580). We can add that in a magic song Ilmarinen and Väinämöinen are the two demiurges who were responsible for the creation of the first spark (Kuusi 1980: 291). Since in antiquity the creation of material is always connected with the creation of the spiritual and the smith is also musician, poet, healer and magician, it is natural that the shaman par excellence of the Finns, i.e. Väinämöinen, is, apart from being an incomparable musician, also a smith.

According to tradition, Ilmarinen is also the creator of the "cosmic pillar" which sustains the dome of the sky. On the other hand, the gods of the sky often appear with the implements of the smith: it is sufficient to think of the Finnish Ukko, who in his conjurations and prayers is accompanied by a hammer, sword and bow with which he hurls thunderbolts onto the earth. His weapons have parallels in other mythologies: we can give the example of the hammer of the Scandinavian Thor and the use by the gods of the sword; this is also to be found in Hungarian and Mordvinian pagan mythology. The hammer, which is the heir of the Stone Age axe becomes the ensign of the strong gods, that is of the storm gods. When the smiths on earth strike the anvil, they are imitating the movement characteristic of the god whose collaborators they in fact are. Since they possess superhuman skills, whether divine or demoniac, blacksmiths can forge lethal weapons which have a mysterious power, just like the thunderbolt. The

Finnish and also the Zyryan shaman can be seen to be forced to perform "black magic" through witchcraft, even if the prime function is that of dealing with "white magic". In the same way there are the so-called "black smiths" who can "eat" the souls of men (Eliade 1985: 500–501).

In the *Kalevipoeg* of the Estonians the magician-craftsman assumes a role of prime importance. The son of Kalev dies (Kreutzwald 1936: 168–169) by the sword which he had bought from the most famous blacksmith of Finland whose elder son he had killed (Kreutzwald 1936: 39–46). Even if a magician had stolen it from him, the sword which fell in the river Kääpa (Kreutzwald 1936: 83–85), becomes mortal for the hero of the poem. Obviously the ancient Estonians believed in the shamanic skills of smiths, who generally act for the good of the individual or the race, but can also transform themselves into terrible enemies and bring about for those who must have revenge that death which alone can punish the guilty, giving them the possibility to be reincarnated with new strength and a greater sense of justice.

In the Estonian poem the ancient Finno-Carelian god Ilmarinen returns as a god of the underworld, in so far as he is a blacksmith: in fact the seven companions of the god are given the task of working in a forge situated at the centre of the hill which reaches the sky on the blade of a sword, while the god watches them from a gold plated throne (Kreutzwald 1936: 94–95).

In Western European beliefs the metal sword is forged by the gods or craftsmen-magicians whose tools are endowed with life and possess extraordinary strength.

There are many ancient Medieval representations in the sagas about Siegfried, the ironsmith, and of Wieland, the swordsmith coming from Sweden, Norway and Gotland. Wieland is seen to be one of the more famous representatives of the blacksmith's art in the Germanic sagas: amongst other things he forged the Mimung sword, which was originally attributed to a certain Mimir, and a man who seems real (Von See 1971: 140). He also constructed the first boat, is the master of the air as well as fire, is connected with the underworld and especially with the dwarves. Wieland is quite well known over a wide area: he figures also in English sagas, and under the name of Galans in ancient French poetry. He possesses the same characteristics as Ilmarinen: it is quite probable that we are dealing with the same god. Others have already claimed a Finnish origin for Wieland (Müller 1886: 141). Some have underlined the similarities between the myths of Wieland and the Greek myths of Hephaestus and Daedalus, but this hypothesis has been criticized by many scholars for whom Hephaestus was not really a Greek god but had Uralo-Altaic origins (Müller 1886: 142–143). Moreover in the *Edda* Wieland is said to be the son of a Finnish king, while in the saga of Theodoric it appears that it was his father who had connections with the Finnish people.

The Germanic Loki, who has already been recognized as a Finnish deity,[1] is related to the myth of Ilmarinen (Müller 1886: 139). Loki also is a god of fire and air (he is sometimes called Loptr "Air" and Logi "Flame") and he is master of the sea and the inventor of the first boat, is acquainted with the world of the dead, indeed he is the father of Hel, the goddess of death, frequents the dwarves by whom he has Odin's spear forged, and also the hammer of Thor, the hair of Sif (Turville-Petre 1964: 181), and he himself, using the power of the runes, makes the magic sword Laevatein with which he would be able to kill the cock Vidhofnir which symbolizes the power of reawakening (Mastrelli 1951: 291).

[1] On the other hand the similarity in certain characteristics between Loki and Louhi in the *Kalevala*, such as their hatred of the other gods, is clear.

The source of these myths should not cause surprise: their diffusion from Finland to the rest of Scandinavia was helped above all by numerous cultural, economic and social exchanges between the relative inhabitants, and also by the ancient nomadic condition of the blacksmith who, being in contact with many tribes, became the chief agent in the spreading of the mythologies and rituals of metallurgy. However, for the Indoeuropeans too fire and air, or rather the wind, characterize the god of creation, and therefore the blacksmith-magician par excellence, as well as the god of the final destruction. In fact, fire, like Loki, encloses within itself both creative and destructive power. It has positive and negative qualities and this explains why it is worshipped and feared alike, as is the blacksmith or shaman who knows how to control it.

Both in the Finno-Ugric and Western European areas the smith is connected with sun myths, in fact he is the "Heavenly Blacksmith".

Among ancient peoples phenomena of the light such as the sun, the moon and lightning on which the harvest depended, were held to be forged by a superior being, by a blacksmith. He held within himself mystery and magic derived from his skill in transforming metals and regenerating them in a kind of ritual in which he propitiates the power of fire, his own heat.

Among the Finno-Ugric peoples the smith is often represented by a real shaman; in the West European area too he is an exceptional figure, in many cases interpreted by a divinity, a giant or a dwarf. In Germanic mythology it is the dwarves who form trees; furthermore, young heroes resort to them as apprentices. At times they cast terrible spells which recall the spell of the smith mentioned in the *Kalevipoeg*. In the *Edda* dwarves are called Liósálfar (Elves of the Light) (Polia 1983: 91): in their capacity of blacksmiths they are considered to be either the forgers of the sun or they themselves are the representatives of the rays of the sun.

Apart from the enterprises of superhuman smiths, the Nordic sagas of the gods record information about the earthly smith: he learns his skill from a superior being or a more expert smith, is helped by dwarves who are masters of this type of craftsmanship, and the gods stay at his house. Odin, during one of his countless travels, stays with the smith Pislir who offers him lodging and an iron horse. The smith Boldermann also belongs to this category, and he shoes the horses of the heroes of the mountains for the decisive battle: his reward is the old nails of the horse shoes, which are transformed into golden nails. The smith all over the Germanic world respects the tradition of keeping away the forces of evil by striking on feast days three preliminary blows with the hammer on the anvil. The blacksmiths of French Switzerland strike three blows in the morning at the beginning of work. The smith exorcizes the devil, breaks spells, identifies robbers and predicts the future. The water with which he tempers the iron has a precious therapeutic function. The iron itself protects the person who touches it from the spirits of evil (Frazer 1963: 225–226). The Germanic smith, in the same way as the smiths of the rest of Europe and Asia, observes particular prohibitions among which the most important is that of not allowing women to enter the forge because otherwise the iron would not solder. The smith enjoys the respect of the people everywhere.

In conclusion, either in the West European world or in that of the Finno-Ugrians, the smith is the human projection of the "Heavenly Creator": fire is the medium which connects him with supernatural powers. His connections with the extraordinary creative forces are more evident in the shamanic field, especially in the myths in which the smith and the shaman coincide, but leave clear signs also in the Indoeuropean area. It is true that in Finno-Ugric mythology smiths are fundamental figures and that in Western European mythology they appear in a later period: this is explained by the fact that

the characters of the latter period are not often original (Wieland seems more a goldsmith than a blacksmith), even though they are constructed on the basis of foreign influences, sometimes of a shamanic nature. In the same way metallurgic magic in West Europe has assimilated many shamanic elements.

Finally one should remember that in the whole of the Western European area it is the alchemist who inherits and perfects the art of the smith. The smith's forge assumes a refined form in the oven of the alchemist whose aim is to transform base metals into precious ones. It is interesting to note that among the great alchemists many are men of the Church: like Bacon they assume both functions of the "homo faber" and the "homo religiosus", in the same manner as the shaman-craftsman for whom magic is at the same time religion. Very early in the West the magic aspect is distinguished from the religious one in a rupture which splits the compromise formula of "magic-religion".

Van Lennep justly emphasizes that in Alexandria, the city of the Ptolemies,

> convergèrent un ensemble très éclectique de spéculations philosophiques, de techniques mystiques et de rites artisanaux
>
> (there was a convergence of a very eclectic ensemble of philosophical speculations, mystic techniques and craftsman's rites) (Van Lennep 1971: 14).

When the influence of Alexandria had ceased, in the whole of Europe the alchemist

> se présenta comme l'artisan d'un univers conçu comme une grandiose unité organique et dynamique
>
> (presented himself as the craftsman of the universe conceived as a great organic and dynamic unity) (Van Lennep 1971: 17).

Such a concept is consequently reflected in the Hungarian alchemic rite founded on the gradual of the mass by Melchior Cibinens in which magic and religious elements still coexist (Van Lennep 1971: 21).

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Finno-Ugric Shamanism and the Western European World of Magic: the Ambivalent Nature of the Workers of Sacred Acts

The shamanism of the ancient Finno-Ugric and Siberian peoples aimed at resolving the struggle between good and evil by means of ritual practices performed by the shaman. They were similar in aim to those of so many workers of magic and sorcerers in Western Europe, capable of exorcizing negative forces either partially or totally. For the Medieval scholar evil, despite its presence in the world, was not absolute but secondary in respect to good of which it was in some way a part, either because it was considered as the absence of good or because it was regarded as imperfect. It was a "fragment", albeit disordered, of the secular plan of man's dominion over the world, of humanism itself, to want the destruction of evil which seemed to challenge the power of reason.

The complementary nature of good and evil in the Finno-Ugric field is clearly expressed in a mild dualism of a cosmogony on the basis of which the good and the bad first clashed, but simultaneously helped each other in turns in the creation of the world. Likewise life and death were complementary and opposed to each other in the shamanic view. Death meant the absence of life, but it was only negative in appearance and disrupted human existence because in fact it was a necessary stage on the way to rebirth. The shaman, albeit a predominantly positive character, inevitably figured in his relationship with evil in his function as a worker of sacred acts. "Sacred" in fact, in etymological terms, meant "holy", "venerable" and thus "pure", but also "cursed", "execrable" and "impure". The relationship between "sacred" and negativity was therefore implicit. Even the sacred wood of the Finno-Ugrians was a territory "apart", mysterious and connected, like the tree, with good and evil forces, and therefore the object of fears. For all Finno-Ugrians the wood was above all the place where sacrifices were performed and was therefore sacred and under a taboo, charged with power and consequently dangerous.

The function of the wood and sacred vegetation was similar in popular Western European tradition and in magic legends. In the latter, the forest became the place where the "non-human" witch roamed and fought with the "human" hero, a dramatic place of initiation.

In the West the ordinary witch was much more complex than the witch met in persecution trials. Like the shaman, she was able to perform evil and thus create advantages for the individual or the community, and to cure the sick and transfer the illness on to the enemy. The witch was at the same time the *bona femina* and author of *maleficia*. She knew how to encourage and obstruct fertility in humans and in the field, as Margaret A. Murray rightly observed (Murray 1978: 161–175).

The original witch was the "key to good" as well as the "key to evil". Her negative characteristics became exclusive only as a result of the witch trials as witnessed in the whole of Europe, including Hungary. In the West, however, secular and ecclesiastical legislation stressed the diabolic aspect of witches (Muraro 1977: 8). In opposition to them we find the benevolent wizards who were able to recognize and pursue them, such as the *benandante* of Friuli and the Istrian *kresnik* (Klaniczay 1983: 412–431). This contrast however arose from the terror experienced with respect to witches, and

was simply, on closer analysis, an example of the usual struggle between the workers of sacred acts, similar to those which took place between the Hungarian *táltosok* when it was a question of regulating the rains to encourage the harvest (Diószegi 1958: 381).

Basically neither the *táltos* nor the *benandante* nor the *kresnik* were enemies of witches but lived with them without antagonism.

Witches' familiarity with snakes and water reveals their relationship to the subterranean world of the dead which was inhabited, in Finno-Ugric imagination, by serpents, lizards etc. and was usually situated on the far side of a water course. Figures similar to the western witch were the Mordvinian *ved'-ava*, who could be a very beautiful girl or an ugly old woman who protected rivers and the *vasorrú bába* ("witch with the iron nose") in the Magyar tale – she played nasty tricks on people who tried to drink. The nocturnal rides of the witches who followed Diana were simply a "variant" of the Germanic "wild hunt" of those who died before their time: these witches were led by Perchta-Holda (Ginzburg 1979: 62), a parallel to which is found in the great numbers of people kidnapped by the fairies in the Balkan area. The connection between the witch, who is excluded from the daily experience of humans, and the dead can be compared with the similar relationship between the shaman and the hereafter. When this characteristic of the witch is misinterpreted in a negative sense, it approaches the counterpart of the shaman, i.e. the vampire. Similarly the witch, not only in her role of midwife, was considered as greedy for blood, and as is known from fables, could not survive without the continuous capturing of souls. It was she too who could summon bad weather and darkness. In connection with this we think of the "storm" witches of the trials, or the witches of myth-legend such as Louhi of the *Kalevala*, who, like witches in many tales, sent darkness on the earth. Whoever tried to devour the sun and the moon was opposed by powerful workers of sacred acts, called for the occasion "the liberators of the stars". The common witch, however, as opposed to the vampire, throughout the Middle Ages maintained an ambivalence like that of the shaman, in her function as worker of the good which of necessity absorbed evil and subsequently was sent against enemies. The relationship existing between witch and vampire on the one hand and the witch and the shaman on the other, which is apparently contradictory, can be explained by the dual power, both positive and negative, of the witch and the shaman as workers of sacred acts. On the other hand, we know that the vampire also possessed shamanic characteristics.

It is above all in tradition and in fable that western wizards and witches appear in close relationship with shamans. The witch of fables is not just harmful but helps the hero and, even when she clashes with him, turns out to be helpful because she allows him to overcome his initiation trials. It is she who then puts together the body of the hero which has been torn to pieces and in this way recreates him. The "historical" witch on the contrary lost her fundamental ambiguity: her ambivalent role was interrupted by the judge who wrongly took the place of the hero in the fable.

The Hungarian witches and wizards accused in the trials of the 17th and 18th centuries, declared themselves shamans (Klaniczay 1983: 421–422), and as such were protectors of the community and not bearers of destruction. The *benandanti* of Friuli who ended up, and unjustly so, being accused of wicked acts of witchcraft, assumed the same form.

The male and female shaman, in defending their own community, became witches and wizards in the eyes of the enemy community. This gave rise to the fact that the struggles between shamans had to be struggles between shamans of rival groups. In his turn the wolf man, who possessed ecstatic powers and was probably the defender of the group, fought against wizards (Ginzburg 1989: 142). The great battles of the sha-

mans of the Ob-Ugrians or the fight in the *Kalevala* between Louhi "Mistress of Pohjola" and Väinämöinen, the shaman par excellence, indicate the way by which we can understand that the division was not so much between good and bad wizards, but between wizards of two communities who were fighting to obtain prosperity for his own particular group. With regard to this, we can discern the opposition between "one's own people" and "the foreign people", and put them alongside the opposite ideas of "summer" and "winter", "light" and "dark", and the fundamental ambiguity of every worker of magic.

The shaman must be distinguished from other workers of sacred acts, especially for his role as magician of foremost importance, for his intervention only in case of special need. From many points of view, however, instead of opposing witches and wizards, he finished up even identifying himself with them. However, the Hungarian *táltos* "wizard" was, doubtlessly, a shaman without his usual role (Mazzoli 1992: 192–194). The "historical" shaman and "historical" witches were only the fruit of a mentality which could not understand what lay beyond the profane, and formed part of the sphere of magic and the sacred. With the decline of Medieval metaphysical certainties and the relative tolerance of "magic practices" prompted by the devil, there followed the delirium caused by the persecutions and the demonologists who a priori admitted the existence of the devil and the human scandal of evil, which the cognitive-demonstrative method accepted as real in so far as it was "possible". This all took place exactly in the period when people began to understand that in magic could be found a new way giving man the power to control nature (Garin 1984: 18). In fact real magic or natural magic, which helped man on his uphill journey towards knowledge, was put in sharp contrast with false or ceremonial magic which led to wickedness (Garin 1984: 21). Thus unfortunately many workers of sacred acts were unjustly accused of diabolic magic.

The ambivalent shaman is found in the Finno-Ugric field among supernatural beings who could become wicked instead of benevolent. The *keremet* of the Cheremis distinguished itself as being dangerous if neglected. The *ulda* of the Lapps, who was protector and master of magic, was also a dangerous subterranean being. The daily existence of the Finno-Ugrians was closely dependent on the whims of the supernatural beings. Even their gods were unpredictable. The "Mother" goddess herself, who was essentially positive in her function of creator, expected to have human victims, as queen of life and its stages, and therefore also of death. Furthermore, there were people among the Finno-Ugrians who practised "black magic" exclusively. In particular there was the Votyak *vedün*, a wizard in contact with that aspect of sacred acts which one could term "cursed": by gathering negative forces in himself and imposing evil, he was able at the same time to make it known and, within certain limits, could eliminate it. The acceptance of evil implied both the overcoming of evil itself and the interpretation of the *vedün* as an indispensable element, even if negative, in the harmony of the cosmos and man. This harmony was safeguarded by the help of the shaman as intermediary. This wizard was a descendant of the primordial spirit of evil who, according to the myths of cosmogony, made the earth come to flower with water, and was therefore an essential element in the cosmos, apart from being intelligible and thus controllable. On the other hand, the same shamanic idea of death as rebirth implied a kind of overpowering of death which changed into good. The complementary nature of good and evil is clearly expressed in the Vogul tribe consisting of the group of the Mōś (Sky People), which sacrificed white horses to the Father of the Sky, and the group of the Por (Earth People) consisting of witches who sacrificed black or brown horses to Mother Earth.

The practice of "black magic", even if only in cases of necessity, by the shaman formed part of his duties as guarantor of cosmic order. The Lappish shaman, for example, became more powerful if he killed other shamans, and he did not hesitate to sacrifice a baby along with a reindeer. The Lappish Stallo, which was a mythical representation of the wicked shamans, despite being a healer, fed on his own relatives. The Lappish tradition clearly proves the positive and negative value of the shaman's activity. With regard to this, it is interesting that the Finnish word *noita* ("shaman, wizard") has the same root, found in the Baltic-Finnish-Lappish area, as the verb meaning "to make spells" and "to blaspheme".

The difference between good and evil could be bridged in Western European magic too, at least before the persecutions and trials of witches. Just like the Magyar *táltosok*, so too the *benandanti* of Friuli or the werewolves had a "sotterranea affinità" ("subterranean affinity") with their adversaries (Ginzburg 1989: 245). Shamanic elements in Europe were attributed by Carlo Ginzburg "a un processo di diffusione" ("to a process of diffusion") (Ginzburg 1989: 193) not always easily recognizable, from the Steppes of Asia to Europe.

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Tree Worship in Finno-Ugric and West European Popular Tradition

A comparative-contrastive analysis of tree worship among West European and Finno-Ugric peoples clearly reveals a considerable amount of more or less direct similarities. We will limit our account to some considerations and comparisons which may lead us to assume primitive contacts or to suppose curious coincidences without dwelling upon the vast evidence of the different peoples.

In particular, the mythical saying of "the water of life", in connection with the tree as an archetypal symbol of fertility, especially in the Ugric, Volga-Finnic and Yakut areas (Hoppál 1978: 375) is to be found in the Germanic myth of the Yggdrasil and in Celtic traditions. For the latter we refer to the *Mabinogion*, i.e. to the episode in which Owein, pouring water from a spring, caused the drying up of an extraordinary tree. It was under this tree that he defeated the black knight, thus enabling himself to marry the latter's wife and to assume the role of regenerator (Agrati and Magini 1982: 183, 189–190).

The Finno-Ugric practice of hanging sacrificial victims on a "shamanic tree" occurs among other European peoples. In particular, the ancient Germans made offerings, even human ones, to trees around the temple of Uppsala, near the famous "evergreen tree" (Derolez 1962: 218, 222–223; Brøndsted 1976: 247), which has already been compared with the Yggdrasil, on which Odin hanged himself. Furthermore, in the *Gutasaga* we learn that the inhabitants of the island of Gotland used to hang human bodies in the groves which became sacred through the process of the putrefaction of the bodies (Baetke 1944: 24), the only method that for the Slavs and Finno-Ugrians prevented the transformation of the dead person into a vampire. Sacrifice by hanging was also practised in honour of Esus, a Gallic god who is represented amongst other things as a woodcutter, and also in honour of Odin, the god of Teuton warriors, who is probably Celtic in origin (Powell 1974: 153). Victims put inside a tree trunk were sacrificed to the Celtic sky god Taranus (Markale 1982: 423). In Sparta a human victim was tied to the trunk of a sacred tree representing Artemis Erecta as part of a fertility rite. It seems that in Greece they attached dolls, a symbol of the fertility goddess Ariadne or Helen, to fruit trees: on the ring of the treasury of the acropolis at Mycenae there is a representation of a tree with one of these dolls (Graves 1983: 237, 270, 404). Among surviving practices of propitiatory sacrifice in honour of the spirits of vegetation in modern Europe we must mention the practice of erecting a green branch on the roof of a new house, a sign of good omen, attested to both in Belgium and also in Italy, in Parmesan and Piacentine tradition, and in Germany.

The "cosmic tree" with seven or nine branches substituted among the Finno-Ugrians by a column or sacred pole, placed in the centre of the universe, like the pole in shaman songs of the Vasyugan Ostyaks, is found in Western Europe. The "pillar of the world" which surmounts a horse and supports a wheel in the centre, placed symbolically in the centre of a revolving world, figures in an interesting Celtic candlestick, dated to the first millennium B.C., which reproduces the chariot of the sun (Corradi Musi 1988: 79). We are reminded of the huge oak in popular Finnish songs with "a golden wheel" representing the sun between its branches, on which a cuckoo sings and

drops gold and copper from its beak, a symbol of the vitality of the tree which renews itself eternally (Toivonen 1946–47: 40). As far as the binomial "cosmic horse-axis" is concerned, which is documented in Indian religion in the rituals of ascension and in the sacrifice of the horse, this also appears in Germanic culture: it is sufficient to remember that Odin attached his horse to the "cosmic tree"; what is more, the same name Yggdrasil "Steed of the Terrible One", i.e. Odin, is connected with the horse. We know the importance of the horse among the Siberian shamans, who flew to the sky on the soul of a sacrificed horse, and among the Finno-Ugric shamans in particular.

In Celtic cosmogony, "cosmic pillars" supported the world: they are represented, for example, in Britain by the poles of the *henge* (Boncompagni 1984: 175). A similar symbology seems to have been the famous Irminsul, which was placed in the sanctuary of the same name and was destroyed by Charlemagne in a campaign against the Saxons and two columns which were found on the Bronze Age site of Căscioarele south of Bucarest. In all probability the so-called columns of "reclining Iuppiter", which are to be found in great number between the Rhine, Moselle and the Saone, marked the "earth's axis", while Iuppiter represented as a wheel, the symbol of the year, was the sky god ruler of the cosmos (Eliade 1982: 146). On the other hand the column, which is already quite frequently found in Minoan art, like the pillar and other forms of support used in architecture, is symbolically related to the *axis mundi*. A certain "solidarity" between the worship of sacred stones and the tree is attested even in ancient Cretan religious practice: à propos we can cite the eloquent example of the pillar associated with the olive tree, the emblem of Athena Parthenos (Eliade 1981: 156), which reveals the perfect fusion of tree-cosmos-divinity. Turning to the Germanic world, Heimdallr of the Æsir is either directly identified with a slanting pole or a tree, or is compared with Thor who is closely connected with the sacred house pole (De Vries 1976: 781). In the Finno-Ugric field the archetypal tree represented by a pole is a common motif. It is well known, for example, that the main support pole of a tent represented the "cosmic axis".

Traces of the ancient cult of the "tree of the world" are to be found even in Jewish culture, especially in the candlestick with seven branches, which is in fact a stylized version of the tree of the Assyrians. Furthermore, the genealogical tree in Medieval heraldic iconography originates in the image of the "tree of life", which grows up from the area of the roots of the race and spreads out into the area of the individual families. The upturned tree, which was placed by the Lapps near the altar during the annual sacrifice of a bull to the god of vegetation (Eliade 1981a: 284), does not only appear among the Finno-Ugrians: one only has to think of the amazing upturned tree of the Celts with its nine branches decorated with bright birds (Polia 1983: 19), or that of the Cabala which expresses the idea of creation as an external manifestation of the world of the gods. On the other hand the Egyptian pyramid, as a representation of the "cosmic mountain", recalls symbolically the upturned tree, and is found both in Western Europe and among the Finno-Ugrians: we may quote the example of the Himingbjörg of the ancient Germans or the mountain with seven steps of the Ostyaks, on which is written the destiny of mankind on a tree with seven branches (Eliade 1985: 291, 297). The connection of the mountain or the tree with destiny, which is found among the Ottoman Turks, appears, amongst other things, in the myth of Yggdrasil, on which the eternal time cycle depends and, even if less directly, in the divination of the ancient Germans practised by the soothsayer *tanhlytere*, he who prophesies with branches, and also of the early inhabitants of Scandinavia, who used twigs soaked in the blood of victims.

The flying creatures connected with the "cosmic tree", which are a symbol of the souls about to be born and of the "free soul" of the shaman in Finno-Ugric and Samoyed folklore, can be compared with the extraordinary birds, manifestations of nature beyond the earth, of the tree which was dried up by Owein in the *Mabinogion* (Agrati and Magini 1982: 183, 189–190). Even if the image of the Yggdrasil with an eagle on the top and a snake at the base seems oriental in origin, it can be placed alongside the representations of the archetypal tree with its motifs of animals forms: these belong to the mediterranean area from the Roman period and even more frequently to the lower Medieval period, through the influence of Arab and Jewish treatises and travellers' reports. In fact, the mythological idea of the "tree of the world" with animals with antlers and a spring nearby represents a synthesis of those characteristics from which the idea of the Garden of Eden originates (Riemschneider 1973: 200). Furthermore, the dragons or snakes which guard the tree or are connected with it are found in Western Europe just as they are in the Finno-Ugric area: it is sufficient to remember in Italy the "cosmic tree" represented in the Baptistry of Parma or in the bas-relief of the museum of the cathedral of Ferrara and in Finland the serpent met by Lemminkäinen in the *Kalevala*, a terrible initiatory ordeal that he had to overcome before he could obtain the conquest of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and thus be able to cross the *axis mundi* which joins heaven and earth (Guillot 1970: 153–154). A further similarity between the Indoeuropean view of the "cosmic tree", which seems to be original, and that of the tree of the Uralic and Siberian peoples, is the presence of the sun and the moon at the top of the tree: this motif is absent in the Germanic and Scandinavian areas, and also in the area of the Ob-Ugrians. The two stars contribute to the location of the tree at the centre of the world, where the moon remains intact and the sun never sets. The above representation is fully attested in the European Romanesque and in the Romanesque of the Po region to be of Celtic origin. We recall its presence in Medieval masonic tradition by citing the lunette in the southern part of the romanesque Baptistry of Parma, the work of Antelami, who was a member of the Maestri Comacini.

In the sphere of magic, the connection between woman and the tree is fully documented: both embody the Mother Earth, and her fertility is represented visibly[1]. The cult practised in spring in a sacred wood of ancient Denmark in honour of Nerthus (Tacito 1995: 278–279. "Germania" 40), famous subsequently in Norway as Njord, recalls the Phrygian cult of the Magna Mater, Cybele (Klindt-Jensen 1969: 96; De Vries 1976: 787). Among the Arctic and Finno-Ugric peoples the principle of fertility with regard to the spirit of vegetation was female, in contrast with the peoples of hot climates, although they were traditionally matriarchal. Female divinity does not actually occur in North American Indian shamanism. In pagan Italian beliefs, trees were taboo because they were able to intercept the secret messages of Mother Earth (Camporesi 1981: 120). In Assyrian, Biblical, Indian and Greek traditions woman is presented as a "human tree" due to her capacity to procreate (Cocchiara 1980: 80). The binomial woman-tree is sufficiently evident in myths relative to the Mediterranean goddess Pòtnia who sailed over the waves of the Greek sea aboard her own boat, in the shade of a sacred tree. This double name can also be found elsewhere: we mention the example of the woman near a tree, in most cases an oak, near which the searchers of the Grail find the lover knight wounded or dead (Evola 1983: 111) or the widespread worship in Northern Italy of Madonnas of the Oak, the Elm and the Beech etc. In the case of the Finno-Ugrians we quote the Mordvinian goddess Ange-Pat'äi in connec-

[1] The Mother Earth in Russia in called significantly "Mat' syra zemlja" ("Wet [i.e. fertile] Mother Earth").

The "cosmic tree" of Antelami (lunette of the Baptistry of Parma – Italy)

tion with the birch in her function of protectress of women in childbirth. The Swedes too believed in the tree-protector of pregnant women, while in Cheshire in England people believed in the influence of the birch on girls who, on the first of May, were adorned by their fiancés with birch branches (Polia 1983: 110). Similarly Mordvinian girls, with birch twigs in their hands, went seeking alms on spring holidays dedicated to Ange-Pat'äi (Corradi Musi 1981: 78). In the Russian district of Pinsk at Pentecost, the most beautiful girl, adorned with birch sprays, was carried in procession following an identical ritual to the Hungarian "Queen of Pentecost" (Frazer 1963: 128, 131). Furthermore, on St. Nicholas' Day Hungarian children were given the *Nyírfa Kisasszony* (Miss Birch). Mordvinian children were woken at Christmas with birch branches, the symbol of good health (Corradi Musi 1981: 82). The birch was used by the Mordvinians also to light fires of good omen.

It also seems that fire is closely connected with the tree. As to Germanic beliefs, it is clear from the *Fjölsvinnsmáll* 22 that certain fruits of the "cosmic tree" are carried to the fire to help pregnant women (Branston 1962: 90). It is interesting to note that woman is not only connected with the tree, but also with fire. In the case of the ritual of fire and its connection with the tree in the Finno-Ugric field we can quote the feast of Sürem of the Cheremis, during which they used to jump over burning fires, as did other pagan Europeans, to avert the forces of evil (Frazer 1963: 560). In the same way Druids at the feast of Beltaine at the beginning of May made their cattle pass through two fires in order to protect them (Le Roux 1976: 834–835; Filip 1980: 193–194). A similar ritual is also met in Estonia and Hungary. In Wales bonfires were made by setting fire to nine types of wood from the sparks initially kindled from the oak. Similarly in Scotland on the first of May nine men or three groups of nine men, by rotating an oak pole in a hole in an oak table, kindled the "needfire", i.e. "the fire of poverty" or "need". In this way the annual heavenly cosmogony was duplicated on earth, according to which the fire created nine worlds, while on earth it produced fertility (Polia 1983: 63–64). On the other hand, it is significant that in classical Greece and Rome fires in the home had to be made using only specific types of trees. With regard to the close connection between trees and fire it is interesting to note that the term

berkana, used in runes to mean birch, springs from the Indoeuropean *bher*, which means "highness" and "splendour" (cf. the ancient Icelandic word *brimi* "fire"), from which is derived the ancient Icelandic word *bjarga* "to help". The birch was associated with the idea of height and the fire which represented solar light, and benevolent influences on earth were attributed to it. Polia goes so far as to suppose that the expression *bjargrúnar* "rune of rescue" of women in childbirth is derived from the archaic *björgkrúnar* "rune of the birch". In fact this is possible given the importance of the spirit of the birch in fertility rites in the Western European, Slav and Finno-Ugric areas. Polia has taken into consideration the possibility of the birch of the ancient runic Norwegian poem, in its relation to the goddess of fertility Frigg and to Freya, the goddess of life and death, creator and destroyer, both in close relationship to Mother Earth, the wife of Odin, and both re-echoing the holy marriage of Father Sky and Mother Earth, to whom is due the mystery of fertility (Polia 1983: 109, 111–114).

The European practice of representing the tree of summer with the image of death, at times decorated with branches, recurs in Northern Italy in the iconography of agricultural carts in which the gods of vegetation and funerals appear together to show that death is nothing other than a renewal (Zanichelli 1978: 79). The same European practice of burning the "carnival figure" is intended to lead us to this view of death. It is no accident that the priest of the sacred wood of Nemi in Latium had to die at the hands of his successor, or that "the wild man" in Northern European legends at Pentecost had to die symbolically to be reborn with greater strength. The Greek god Dionysus, like other European gods of vegetation, had a violent death in order to return to a new life. This concept of death figures clearly in the rules of shamanism: it would suffice to quote the example of the shaman candidate who in his initiation on a tree had to die to be reborn. The tree as a symbol of death as a prelude to life accounts for the Finnish practice of planting a tree near a house on the death of a person or of later dedicating to the deceased a single tree with the initials of the dead individual carved on it; again the Carelian custom of the so-called "crossed trees" on which a cross was incised at every funeral, with the intention of hindering the return of the soul (Krohn 1908: 64). As a curious coincidence we mention the "Fó crozá" ("Crossed beech"), an ancient place of worship in the Upper Val Taro in Northern Italy (Micheli 1900). However the magical value of a trunk can be found among the Celts and Germans, who preferred the yew tree on which to carve spells or formulae. Since trees are not only a symbol of death but above all life, they were planted in many parts of Europe on the occasion of a birth. The Greek myth of the birth of Adonis, who was born from the trunk of a tree rich in balsam, and the myth of the men named *melioi* (μήλιοι: "men of the ash tree"), because they were born from ash trees, to be found in Germanic anthropogony, are quite significant. The delightful tie which unites man and tree is also present among the Germans and neighbouring peoples. In particular the personification of the tree in woman is found everywhere in Europe in the well known *maja* or Queen of the May, adorned with branches. Jeanne d'Arc herself in her testimony gave information about the beech on May Day and the Ladies' Tree (Cardini 1979: 213). To find confirmation of the antiquity of May and Midsummer festivals it is enough to recall the Athenian Thargelia (*Θαργήλια*), in which boys carried around a richly decorated branch of olive or laurel, called *eiresione* (εἰρεσιώνη), which served as the May Tree (Vernant 1982: 91–92, 258, n. 97–100), or the Roman "Feast of Joy" in honour of the tree of Atys, who was united in marriage with Cybele, the Asiatic goddess of fertility.

The May Day festival has left diverse traces in popular European culture. For example, the interesting saying, well known in Southern Italy at Lecce "n'haggiu cantata la

rasta"[2] ("the vase of flowers has sung about it"), used ironically as a comment in a quarrel in which the protagonist has clearly expressed his own reasons to the other. The expression "the vase of flowers" is a direct reference to what a girl received near her door from a hopeless aspiring fiancé, on the occasion of the May Day festival. On the other hand, in many Italian popular songs a beautiful lady is often identified with a tree, usually in bloom.

Among numerous sacred trees the oak must be considered the most important: it was the emblem par excellence among the Proto-Germans of the archetypal tree (Eliade 1981a: 287) whose worship is probably Aryan in origin and was associated with the God of the Sky (Frazer 1963: 708–710). Oak branches were indispensable in the sacrifices of the Celts to the gods and the oak possessed its own divinity, at least according to Irish sources and Roman inscriptions (Filip 1980: 106, 180); on the other hand, it seems that the trunk of the oak represented Iuppiter. Perhaps Pliny's mistake in associating the word "druids" with the Greek *drus* (δρῦς: "oak") arose from the fact that he compared the oak groves of Olympia with the sacred woods of the Celts and the sanctuary of the oak of the Galatians (Drunemeton) (Powell 1974: 155). However the Greek cult of the oak seems Indoeuropean in origin. Even today in Wiltshire and particularly at Stonehenge at the summer solstice, when ancient Druidic ceremonies were re-enacted in honour of the sun, the one who draws the spear implanted in a fissure of the Heal Stone is crowned with interwoven oak leaves. The oak, which was mainly worshipped in Gaul, appears in the Gallic poem *Kad Goddeu* ("Battle of the saplings") among the trees into which the Bretons were transformed by magic, and the oak represents strength while the birch knowledge (Markale 1982: 420). According to Irish legend, Cu Chulainn heard the noise of the battle between two armies of men changed into oaks by the three witches, daughters of Calatin (Markale 1982: 410). The idea of the battle of the trees is also described by Livy in the episode dealing with the death of the consul Postumius in the "Litana silva" (Livio 1995: 454–457, XXIII 24) and by Strabo with reference to the defence put up by the Morini, the Atrebates and the Eburones who interwove branches of thorny shrubs (Strabon 1966: 155, IV, 3, 5); the same idea recurs in the battle of Mag-Tured of the Tuatha Dé Danann, while there remain only traces in the siege of Cordova according to a chanson de geste of the 13th century, *The Capture of Cordova*, and the *History of False Turpin*, when the spears of the Franks became covered with leaves (Markale 1982: 116, 410–411). Without dwelling too long on the Lithuanian worship of the oak sacred to Perkūnas the storm god, who corresponds with Perún[3] of the Western Slavs (Dvornik 1974: 37) or on the Latvian cult (which regarded the oak as the male element as opposed to the female lime tree) (Vyncke 1976: 754) or the cult of the oak among the ancient Slavs in the vicinity of Stettin (Unbegaun 1948: 429) or again that of the Greeks and the Italic peoples who associated it with the Sky God, we may quote some place names of Medieval origin: for example "Querzola" near Modena in Italy, which embodies the residue of these most ancient acts of worship (Violi 1974: 19–22). As to the importance of the sacred oak in Finno-Ugric paganism we refer to the oak tree in the second canto of the *Kalevala* which was called "cher gland" (i.e. "dear, beautiful acorn") by the worshippers of hermitism, and "arbre affreux" (i.e. "tree of death"), alluding to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Guillot 1970: 29); by others, however, it is identified with the Milky Way. Finally a particularly powerful representation of the oak is that beneath

[2] The word *rasta* is derived from the Greek *gastra* (γάστρα: "vase").

[3] His name is probably connected etymologically with the Indoeuropean word *pergus* ("oak").

which stood the beautiful girl with the golden mouth, surrounded by birds in flight, and met by the same Kalevipoeg in the national Estonian poem of that name (Kreutzwald 1936: 29).

There was a very close connection with the cult of the oak and that of mistletoe, which, being endowed with the vital energy of nature, struck a mortal blow, following the ritual, on Balder the son of Odin during his initiation (De Vries 1976: 783–784); similarly a stem of hemlock killed the Finnish Lemminkäinen. In particular, the mistletoe was gathered by the Druids according to specific rites and was considered by the Latins to possess a special magic strength: in fact Aeneas needed a spray of mistletoe in order to return from the underworld (Piggot 1982: 88; Virgilio 1989: 216–217 Book VI vv. 201–212).

It was with the birch, from which Väinämöinen hollowed out the *kantele* in the *Kalevala*, that the drum was made in Central and North Asia, where as in Western Europe in the whole of the Medieval period bows were made of yew; the Celts used yew wood for shields in as much as they believed it was rich in apotropaic properties. The king of Ireland was called Eochaid (The Fighter with the Yew). According to the Celts of Northern Ireland the birch was a tree of good omen: specifically in the ballad *The Wife of Usher's Well* its branches were used by her dead sons when they visited their mother to make themselves recognizable as good spirits (Polia 1983: 74, 110–111). In Gaul the birch was a symbol of the dead as it was a tree whose leaves drop and grows more in the north. The first consonant of the Oghamic alphabet, which is probably of Phrygian origin, goes back to the birch: it corresponded with the winter solstice and chased away the spirit of the old year (Graves 1983: 164–165); like the oleaster in Greece, it symbolized the advent of the new year in many parts of North West Europe. Similarly the leaves of the laurel along with figs formed the Etruscan new year gift and was offered to Janus (Cantù 1893: 46). The Finno-Ugrians, the Romans and the ancient Germans believed in the magic properties of the birch, and in their Midsummer festivals used to plant it or put a branch of it on the roof of a house.

The *fir* tree, which is linked in the *Kalevala* with the hereafter, as witnessed by its golden peak (Propp 1977: 308–310), which Ilmarinen tried to reach in order to visit Pohjola (Lönnrot 1978: 128–129), was also a symbol par excellence of the world of the dead and naturally of life even for the Celts in so far as it is evergreen. According to tradition, Catuleus the chief of the Eburones was poisoned by the berries of the yew: perhaps his death could be explained by a clan taboo (Vendryès 1948: 281). In an old English runic poem the *yew* tree appears as a protector against lightning, just as in Christian Medieval beliefs (Polia 1983: 74). In Northern Italy, especially in Emilia Romagna, the olive tree has the same function (Riccardi 1891: 31). In Wales *yew* trees are still planted near churches: the poisonous berries deter birds and thus assure the safety of the graves within the precincts of the church. The connection between the *yew* and the sky god is also found in the system of the main sacred trees of the Finno-Ugrians.

Among Irish legends on the subject of trees we may recall the legend of the Yew of Ross and the Ash of Uisnech: the latter, amongst other things, was used by Eidol Gadarn (Eidol the Strong) to kill six hundred and sixty six Saxons in the so-called plot of the Long Knives (Markale 1982: 274). Among the trees which the Greeks associated with death are black poplars and pear trees whose wood was used to make the statue of Hera at Mycenae; it was with the pear tree's name, i.e. Onca that Athena was addressed as goddess of death in her sanctuary in Boeotia (Graves 1983: 110, 226–227). Furthermore the "tree of life" and death figures on the vase of Gundestrup which was found among the Cimbri.

Traces of the worship of the oak, practised by the Celts, are found in an Italian legend of peasant origin, well known at Caprara (Reggio Emilia), according to which a sow and seven piglets appeared near one of these very high trees (Bertani 1978: 43–44): the theme is also present elsewhere in Western Europe, especially in Wales, and is quite often found in Romanesque art. In Emilia a sow appears near more oaks which are exorcised by means of the erection of a *maestà* (a wayside shrine) (Masoli 1981: 21). However oaks symbolize the sun while the number of piglets seems to relate to the seven planets in their connection with the changing of the seasons.

Among the sacred trees known in Italy we can mention the sorb (service tree), which was the tree of witches and was especially revered by the Druids, and the walnut tree, worshipped by the Longobards of Benevento (Bonomo 1971: 309–330), which had already been consecrated in Greece to Car or Caria the goddess of wisdom, who became Carmenta goddess of divination in Italian culture.

The hazel tree was especially revered in Ireland and people were named after it. Among the Germans the hazel and other trees like the poplar or trees without leaves were given to unfaithful girls instead of the traditional May (Mannhardt 1904: 163–165).

Sacred woods are common in Finno-Ugric and West European paganism: for the latter it is enough to think of the numerous Celtic place names composed of the word *nemeton* ("wood") (Vendryès 1948: 309–310).

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Creatures of the Natural World in Finno-Ugric Shamanism and Western European Animism

The shaman and creatures of the natural world were closely related in Finno-Ugric culture. In the human field, even if by means of his "second soul", he constituted the same ring connecting the divine and earthly world which, in a sphere we can call more correctly spiritual, was represented by fairy-like creatures, by giants, dwarfs and spirits of the natural world which often made their appearance in the form of animal totems. The shaman, who wore clothes which were typical of totemic elements in his séances, became equal to his spirit guides, i.e. to the totems, in order to function as an intermediary between the divine and earthly worlds (Hoppál 1978: 390). He resorted to these supernatural forces which continually interfered in man's life in a manner analogous to the Western European magician-healer in his function of "medicine-man" and in his other more exclusive function of the one who in ecstasy was able to recover the state of bliss of primordial man before the "break" between heaven and earth which continued to influence human destiny (Eliade 1986: 72–73).

It was only the shaman, thanks to his knowledge acquired during his initiation, who could "bridge" the abyss created between himself and the world beyond the earth (Müller 1898: 93), putting himself in touch with the souls of the dead or the spirits he invoked during séances. The shaman did not resort to the more important divinities to learn about metaphysical truths, but to the supernatural entities of nature, either because they were for the most part the cause of illnesses or because they were, if not always identified with, at least closely connected with the dead, the depositories of absolute and universal wisdom. It was in fact to acquire this quality of the dead that the shaman of the Finno-Ugrians used to spend the night near corpses, just like Celtic Druids and other Nordic priests (Eliade 1985: 104, 408).

In antiquity man paid homage to his ancestors in different forms, among which was that of the spirits of nature. The Lappish "*saivo*-spirit", who entertained men to drinking and eating in woods, in origin represented the dead. It was no coincidence that the fairies of Scotland and Ireland, who are connected with Celtic beliefs, often had greenish complexions and were dressed in green: they too symbolized the dead in so far as green was the symbol of death for the Celts .

"The fairy woman" or *banshee* also wore a green dress: she was one of the Irish spirits of death and was known in the Scottish Highlands as *bean-nighe* "the washer-woman" or *little-washer-by-the-ford* due to the fact that she washed the clothes of those who were about to die (Corradi Musi 1995: 81–82).

Zoomorphization of the spirits of nature also confirms their relationship with the dead and with ancestors and is attested to in Finno-Ugric shamanism as in Western European magic, where clear traces of parashamanic ideas are evident.

The Lappish imps appeared in the form of toads or insects; the spirits of the forest in Estonia at times took the form of birds, wolves or bears (the latter a totemic animal par excellence); the spirits of the woods of the Mordvinians preferred to manifest themselves as cats, dogs, wolves and above all as horses. These characteristics were shared, for example, by the fairies and elves of Great Britain. Among the animal forms which the *pooka* or *púca* of Ireland could assume there was also that of the horse. According

to the legends of Leinster, on the 1st November the *pooka* in the appearance of a very handsome steed gave advice to those who gave him presents: this confirms the hypothesis that it was a case of "a horse of the water" which was a typically November spirit (Yeats 1981: 93) connected with the dead.

We must make reference to the numerous horses buried in Scandinavian tombs or to Sleipnir the grey horse with eight hooves; Odin and his son Hermodh rode on its back and reached the kingdom of the dead. It is not a coincidence that in Nordic folklore grey horses or deformed horses were regarded as omens of death (Turville-Petre 1964: 76). Among many peoples the wolf and the dog were considered as demons of death. The wolf Fenrir, brother of Hel the goddess of death, in the *Edda* devoured Odin in *Ragnarök*. According to certain theories the wolf was one of the forms assumed by the soul to separate itself from the body after death. The belief in werewolves has been explained in this sense as a temporary metempsychosis, a thesis which has acquired greater acceptance by the metamorphosis of such gods as Odin. These gods were able to transform themselves into wolves or other animals while their own bodies remained apparently dead (Turville-Petre 1964: 80–81).

Furthermore the transformation of man into wolf during life, a form which witches also adopted, becomes a kind of anticipation of the final transformation. For the Irish even today the dog is feared as a corpse-devouring demon (De Vries 1991: 225), while for the English black dogs, which are evil, death bringing creatures, were often the ghosts of men who had assumed the form of dogs. Christianity accentuated the satanic connotation of these spirits by increasing their monster-like characteristics. In Great Britain phantom-dogs, such as the *seven whistlers* or the *Gabriel hounds*, described by the inhabitants of Northumberland as dogs with human heads which could prophesy death by flying above a house (Corradi Musi 1995: 81), preserve traces of the concept of the transmigration of souls by means of flight. Similarly the Lapps believed that the souls of the dead, flying over villages in the form of birds, emitted sounds which were louder than a blizzard. Among the Ob-Ugrians the soul, in the form of a bird, took part in the great migration to the land of the dead, whereas in Central Asian and Siberian mythologies birds on the branches of the mythical tree were the souls waiting to be reincarnated. It is clear, therefore, that the zoomorphization of the fantastic characters of the woods shows their relationship with the spirits of the deceased. On the other hand, the image of the dead in the form of animals is presented also in the pagan view of the Western European world: one need only think of *fylgia* "the companion" of the *Edda*, who often appears in the form of animals such as the eagle, the wolf and the bear.

Dwarfs are also part of the world of fairies and are the depositories of wisdom in their role of blacksmiths and craftsmen. They are similar to the elves and other kindred spirits to be found, for example, in Germanic mythology and in the mythologies of the Finno-Ugric tribes. The characters of the fantasy world regarded as blacksmiths could help the blacksmiths of human society, whether shamans or magician-healers. For the Finno-Ugrians dwarfs were also a manifestation of the spirits of the ancestors, as can be clearly seen from the Lappish and Finnish cultures. The connection between the world beyond the tomb and the world inhabited by dwarfs is given greater value by certain interpretations of the Finnish myth of "The Great Oak": the oak tree cut down by the dwarf became the bridge to the kingdom of the dead. This bridge was considered as the Milky Way or the "Way of the Birds" and it led to the boundary of the universe where the firmament was so low as to become inhabitable only by creatures of little stature; here was situated the land of the birds and dwarfs (Toivonen 1946-47: 72–73), i.e. the land of the dead. This dwarf is surprisingly similar to the little tree

spirit which cut down the highest tree at the centre of Menzingen in the Swiss canton of Zug, and thus prevented disasters (Mannhardt 1904: 61–62). For the ancient Germans too, dwarfs were the dead: they lived under the earth and inside rocks which were considered to be the dwellings of the dead in Nordic countries.

The creatures of fantasy of the natural world were connected not only with death but also with vegetation and fertility: this connection, as far as the shamanic world was concerned, had a special significance because, as we know, death was itself life in so far as it was the prelude to a more vigorous earthly existence. It is no accident that the "cosmic tree" symbolized both life and death. The recurrence of female personalities to embody the spirit of the woods in Finnish and Carelian shamanic beliefs was related to the mother figure as a symbol of fertility. Tapio, the god of the woods, could assume the appearance of the "Lady of the Forest", which recalls the similar divinity of the Livonians and the Southern Vepsians. For the Mordvinians the spirits of the woods were represented at times by very tall long-haired women; the mothers of numerous babies, and also the "mothers of the water" were described as young women with silken hair or as old women with long black hair. In the case of the Vots, the spirits of nature, represented as "fathers" and "mothers", were the reflection of the so-called "cosmic couples" who, like the Germanic Freyr and Freyja, guaranteed fertility. The relationship of death-fertility-fairies is found elsewhere in Europe: for example, in the description of the elves of the hills, divided into "fair elves", the kind spirits who used to fertilize the land, and "dark elves" of the sub-soil, i.e. the dead; furthermore, it occurs in the Norwegian legend of the larvae of the giant Ymir which were transformed into the elves of light and darkness, i.e. into creatures generated by death.

The connection between the souls of the dead and trees is clearly visible in the beliefs of the Lapps, on the basis of which the sudden breaking of tree trunks was attributed to the return of the souls of the deceased. Frequently the spirits of the dead took the form of trees: among the Lithuanians the spirits of men assumed the form of oaks, ash trees and birches, while the spirits of women that of firs or lime trees (Corradi Musi 1988: 81).

For the Germans the *moosleute* ("moss people"), the "little ladies", the spirits of vegetation and the tree spirit had characteristics very similar to those of the kobolds of the house. The Votyaks thought that many wood spirits lived in their houses; the ancient Slavs thought that these spirits could enter houses and penetrate the wooden support pillars (Eliade 1983: 45).

Just as life has its double aspect of good and evil, so the creatures of fantasy of the natural world in magic and shamanism could be good or evil. Their great fluidity enabled them to cause damage or, on the contrary, create new vitality. In such cases they blocked the activities of hunting and fishing which were the sole means of sustenance for many ancient peoples. According to Finnish and Carelian beliefs, the spirits of the forest, instead of helping hunters, at times obstructed them by making wild game disappear from their habitats. This proves that even if they were detached from the tree which once hosted them and were thus liberated from the "soul" of the tree, having become autonomous spirits they continued to exercise the same powers as before over the natural world. Furthermore, despite being immortal in so far as they shared the divine nature, these spirits led a life similar to that of terrestrial beings and were subject to the same emotional temperament as human beings: in short, they were creatures acting as intermediaries between heaven and earth (Müller 1898: 470), which not everyone was able to see or to have contact. In the Finno-Ugric field it was the shaman who managed to placate them in an emergency. The *ulda* of the Lapps, which

was originally connected with the "*saivo*-spirit", could turn very unpleasant, if it did not satisfy its wishes; furthermore, it kidnapped newborn Lapps with black hair and replaced them with its old people; here it was behaving like the elves of English tradition, whose favourite victims were newborn babies with fair hair (Corradi Musi 1995: 82). The elves of the mountains, hills, water courses and rocks, who were related to the spirits of the dead and whose habits were close to those of Western European tradition, helped the Lappish shaman to fulfil his functions. The *vu-murt* ("water spirit") of the Votyaks robbed men and enjoyed keeping fish away from fishermen's nets. In short, the spirits of nature expected respect and reverence for taboos from people, otherwise they avenged themselves by causing illnesses in human beings and beast alike. In fact they represented the attempt by man to find an answer to the problems of life and death.

Illnesses, which are a manifestation of the breakdown of the balance between man and spirit, usually caused by the discontent of the spirits of nature, could be healed in Western Europe by the wizard and the witch: both acted for strictly utilitarian ends, just like the Finno-Ugric shaman.

The characteristics of anthropophagy and sometimes vampirism in evil spirits who ate human bodies and deprived them of vital nourishment, were very evident in the shamanic concepts of the Votyaks who actually offered meat and drink to evil spirits, and also in other animistic traditions. We refer to the *lianhaun shee* or "fairy lover" of Irish legends, which sucked the blood from the vital organs of men (Yeats 1981: 177) and to the English belief that sick animals were unexpectedly "eaten" by fairies (Corradi Musi 1995: 83).

The similarity between the elves and other fairy-like creatures on the one hand and the dead on the other is also noteworthy in the respective manifestations of evil. The dead in fact, as we can clearly observe in Finno-Ugric beliefs, in particular in the beliefs of the Zyryans of Perm, if neglected, got their revenge on people by causing illnesses. We recall the black elves of Germanic mythology, which hid in the depths of mountains, as being secret and evil forces, and they were in fact the souls of the dead who had not found bodies into which they could be reincarnated.

The immortal creatures of fantasy of the natural world loved to make fools of mortals and they behaved in such strange ways, laughing at funerals and crying at weddings, so as to create embarrassment in those who possessed the gift of second sight. The Estonian spirit of the forest, just like the Zyryan *versa*, enjoyed misleading people in the woods by changing the positions of trees marking the path or by transforming itself into a tree giving false directions on its trunk. The fairy creature which had the habit of making people take the wrong road in Britain was called *pixy-led* ("led by a *pixy*"), that is a particularly mischievous elf which was a common phenomenon in the regions of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. In Ireland the elf which had the power to make anyone who had stepped on him lose his sense of direction was called *stray-sod* ("straying grassy clod").

The fantasy creatures of the forest could also assume the appearance of a giant, like the Zyryan *versa* and the Votyak *pales-murt*, both endowed with only one eye, one hand and one leg: they seemed to have much in common with the Fáchan, a monster of Celtic origin, traces of which do not exist in Germanic and Scandinavian mythology (Corradi Musi 1995: 84).

The arrival of Christianity at a later stage did not prevail over the original animistic forms present in Finno-Ugric shamanism, but many spirits of the natural world maintained their original role of beings connected with ancestors, many of whom had been deified. Instead, in Western Europe Christianization and its concomitant struggle against

demons reduced these fairy creatures to little ethereal beings, which were entirely harmless or to wicked imps, which were not particularly hostile.

In the trials of witches held in Britain between the 15th and 17th centuries, the accused tried to clear themselves by asserting that they had received their powers from fairies or spirits of the dead (Corradi Musi 1995: 84): in common belief these beings were of very little importance. Others, however, such as the Germans, continued to develop their belief in the evil of these fairies which, in Medieval folklore, were often identifiable with witches and other devilish beings. In rare cases, including the shamanic field also, the influence of Christianity was felt: for example, the Zyryan Kul, the god of water and of death too, assumed the name of Vakul and became the King of Hell. In the 19th century he was represented as a naked man with wet hair and nails like claws, or as a woman with a terrible voice who suffocated men in the water with her enormous breasts. The Vepsians of Onega called the devil and the wicked spirit of the forest *metshine* (*mets* = "forest") (Paulson 1965: 181).

In origin the creatures of fantasy of the woods, as symbols of the forces of nature and the dead, hovered permanently between good and evil: they helped the growth of vegetation, but at the same time it was the wind and rain which destroyed crops, and also illnesses and magic which enslaved men. They represented a mysterious world which only a few privileged people could know; in short they were a projection of the fear of the unknown. Elsewhere in Europe too, fairy creatures were in origin connected with a concept of life which was in some ways parashamanic, but their original significance soon lost its distinctive features due to the intervention of Christianity.

The theory of demonology recognized demons and the souls of the dead as magic beings, but only the souls of the unburied dead and those who had died a violent death or women who had died in childbirth.

The close relationship between animism, totemism and magic beliefs on the one hand and bewitched creatures on the other leads us to believe that the origin of the latter lies in animism, while their life might be connected with magic beliefs. Obviously in the field of shamanism these fairy creatures were especially important because they were an integral part of a view of the world in which life-death, living man-dead man were the opposite poles of a single absolutely indivisible reality whose balance could be maintained only by the shaman.

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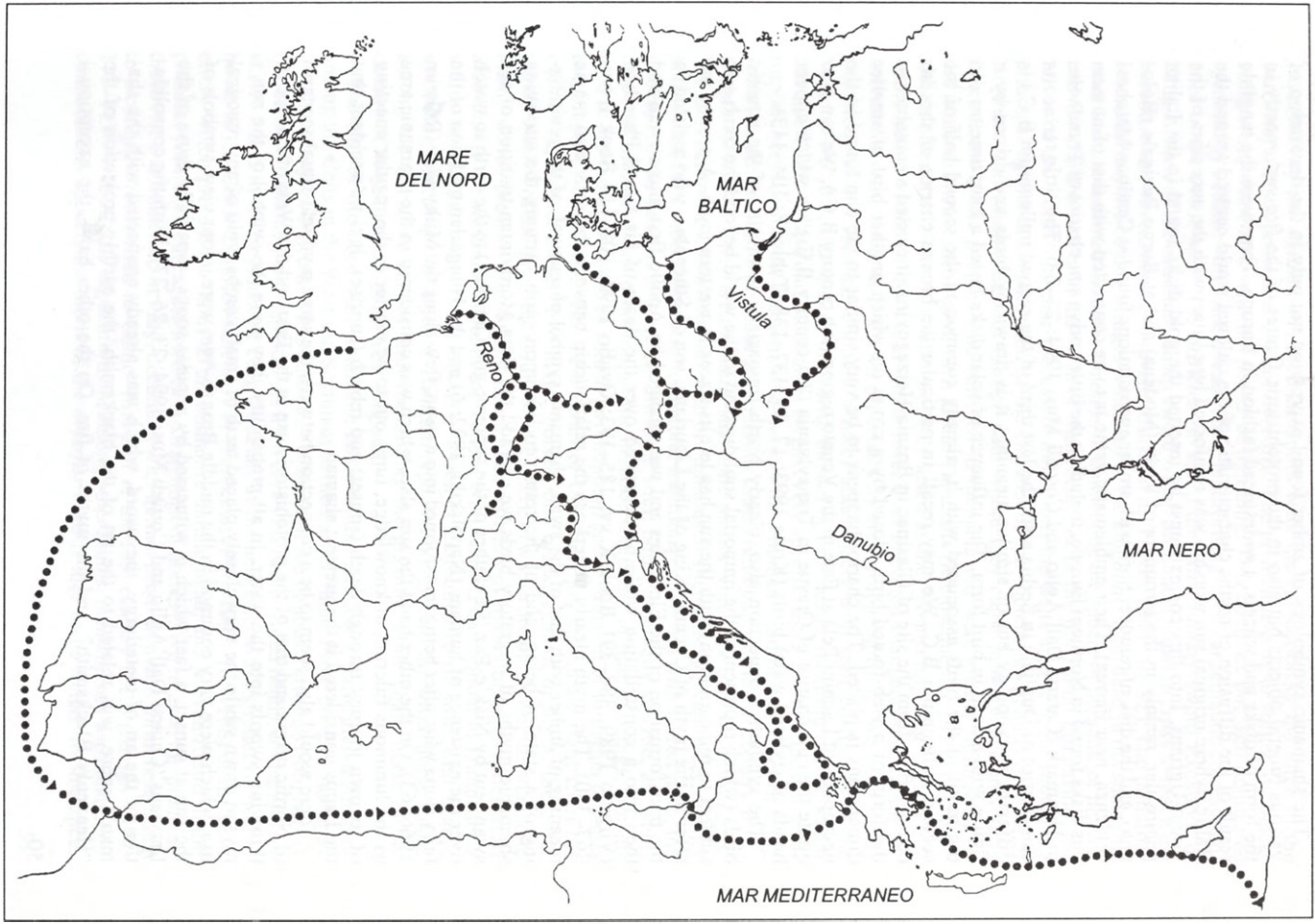
Studies on the Beliefs and Myths of the Finno-Ugrians in the New European Historical Context

Studies on the magic-religious view of the world of the ancient Finno-Ugric peoples acquire a revealing significance under various aspects in the new European historical context. They not only answer the need for a scientific interpretation of a specific spiritual and social culture, which in the past was often object of misunderstanding, but also the necessity for a more complete knowledge of that complex cultural *koinè* which characterized Western Europe from the prehistoric period on which even the ancestors of the Finno-Ugric peoples exercised their influence. Anachronisms, integrations, adaptations of legends and beliefs make the reconstruction of the puzzle of shamanic echoes more difficult in the West, where they arrived frequently in various ways and forms, and often by means of a process of mediation. It is clear however that Western and Eastern Europe were from the most distant past much closer to each other than could be imagined at first sight, thanks to direct or indirect relationships. In the prospective of a new Europe it is particularly relevant to rediscover, at least in part, the complex web of relationships which contributed to the creation of the eclectic character of European culture. Among the most archaic channels of transmission of shamanic myths were the trade routes of Baltic amber. The oriental amber route developed contacts between the Baltic peoples and the ancestors of the Scythians, Slavs and Finno-Ugrians, some of whom were to settle at later periods in the Baltic. The western route made possible the transfer of ideas, already of shamanic origin, related to amber, among the Germanic tribes, the Celts and Italic peoples. The latter, by means of the two routes of the valleys of the Elba and the Rhine, reached Italy, after crossing the Alps, already in the Bronze Age (Catarsi Dall'Aglio and Corradi Musi 1994: 19–22). Trade in amber spread along the coasts of the peninsular as far as the South thanks to the ships which plied the Adriatic.

One of the more fascinating survivors of the arrival in the Adriatic, along with Baltic amber, of magic ideas, shamanic in character, is the myth of the Electrides, at the mouth of the Po, first quoted in one of Hesiod's papyri. According to the myth the Electrides or Heliades, in grief at the death of their brother Phaethon (killed with a thunderbolt by his father Zeus because he foolishly wanted to drive the chariot of the sun with catastrophic consequences due to the disobedience of the white horses), were transformed into black poplars (or ash trees) and their tears, i.e. the drops of resin hardened by the sun's heat, became amber (Ovidio 1992: 84–109 Book II vv. 1–366). The islands of the Electrides at the mouth of the Po (from the Greek *elektron* (ἤλεκτρον) "substance of the sun") took their name from these vegetable totems. The tears, through which the trees renewed themselves, indicate the regenerative force of nature without an end to its continuity. Their transformation into amber was linked with the magic, initiatory and propitiatory value of this precious substance (mistakenly considered a mineral) in its connection with the sun's forces, whose light and transparency it seemed to reproduce, and also with the fecundity of sea-water among whose waves it was collected. The fact that, on fusion, it became similar to vegetal resin (from which in fact the fossil was produced) caused amber to become a symbol of transformation from mineral to vegetable, a symbol of "passage" to a better condition.



The trade routes of Baltic amber

The shamanic symbology of amber found expression not only in the decoration of various funeral objects but also in the protohistoric figures of the fire-sun, mostly in the form of disks and wheels, a widespread fashion in Europe. They were the tangible result of the diffusion of myths characteristic of the cultural world centred around the Baltic, where original sun worship was reinforced by contact with the ancestors of the Finno-Ugrians. Into this context must be inserted the gold disks found in the Italian peninsular, mainly in the terramara of Redù (Modena) and at Borgo Panigale (Bologna), and the disk of reindeer horn with amber encrustations found at Castione Marchesi (Fidenza, near Parma). Their emblematic value is to be connected with that of numerous disks found in Northern Europe, including the little votive sun-chariot of Trundholm in Denmark (Catarsi Dall'Aglio and Corradi Musi 1994: 22–23). The little terracotta sun-chariot of Dupljaja in Serbia also (the last third of the second millennium B.C.) is different in typology but of similar meaning: it is drawn by birds and driven by a figure with a head in bird form. The influence of solar disks lasted a long time, as did the motif of the birds associated with it, already common in the second half of the second millennium B.C. We may recall in particular the bronze chariot of the 8th century B.C. from the site of Glasinac in Bosnia-Herzegovina: it carried a container in the form of a web-footed bird, closed by a cover on which another bird of smaller dimensions is placed. The chariot happens to be very similar to the one found in the necropolis of Lachini Pelà at Este in the Veneto region (9th century B.C.). We can also quote the cult chariot of Oraştie in Transylvania (8th century B.C.), on which appear heads of stylized water birds (Kruta 1993: 17, 29, 137–138, Tables 8, 104–113).

The symbolic connection also, clearly North Euroasiatic in origin, of the aquatic birds (which represented the immortal soul directed to the world beyond the tomb and subject to reincarnation) with the sun has left its traces in western myth. A propos we refer to the myth of Cycnus, King of the Ligurians, son of Sthenelus, who assisted in the transformation of the Electrides and was changed by Apollo first into a swan and then into a constellation while he despaired over the death of his friend Phaethon (Virgilio 1989: 388–391 Book X vv. 185–193; Ovidio 1992: 108–111 Book II vv. 367–380). The myth clearly underlines the relationship between the solar and magic meaning of amber with that of the swan, shamanic symbol of renewal, of the revitalizing of a state of being, and of the return to life upon earth. Among the surviving shamanic myths of migratory birds we can add the Erza Mordvinian tradition of the swan sent by Nišk'e-Paz (forefather of the supreme god Čim-Paz) to the earth to watch over the existence of humans (Napolskikh 1992: 6) and the Hungarian tradition of the fairy Ilona who, after being transformed into a swan, flew along the Milky Way (Róheim 1966: 63). On the other hand the sun also, which was considered in the shamanic area as the luminous fulcrum of knowledge, turns out to be master in the regular enacting of its own journey through death (sunset) and rebirth (sunrise). It is no accident that the Lapps considered it the greatest shaman.

There would also seem to be a connection between the same mythical-ritual scenario of Nordic origin and that of the protohistoric use in the East and the West of Europe of throwing swords into the water. In all probability they were the symbol of the sun's rays at dawn while the very closely placed teeth of small combs, void of any practical use, which were very common in the middle Bronze Age, were in our view symbols of the sun at sunset, a fact which is witnessed by popular songs, especially those of the Latvians (Catarsi Dall'Aglio and Corradi Musi 1994: 23, 26–27). With the consolidation of the art of metallurgy, the sword, which was already connected with the shaman's sabre, was related to the art of the blacksmith, the earthly projection of the "Heavenly Blacksmith", and the myths of fire. On the other hand, the exceptional

capacities of the shaman and the blacksmith were the expression of the force of the sun's rays. Both possessed control over fire. The invincible armour forged by blacksmiths was associated with the power of lightning. This complex but well delineated symbology became very widespread. There is surprising but clear semantic correspondence in the Celtic area. It is sufficient to recall the extraordinary sword Excalibur of King Arthur, of the extremely sharp sword which Sir Lancelot had to cross to reach the hereafter and save Queen Guinevere (Chrétien de Troyes 1994: 50–52). The initiatory sword echoes the cutting bridges which led to the kingdom of the dead in the shamanic tradition and assumed the same function of connecting the sphere of humans, of heaven and the dead which held the "tree of the world", or in the horizontal dimension, the "river of the world". In their successive migrations the Celts appear to be among the principal agents of transmission of the cultures of the ancient indigenous peoples of Northern and Middle Eastern Europe with whom they came into contact, including those Proto-Uralic peoples who believed in shamans and were greatly influenced by the same shamanic ideologies, such as the Thracians (Riemschneider 1979: 14) or the Ossets (Dumézil 1980: 12), who probably acted as the "connecting ring". The Celts had a magic vision of the world which reveals an imported shamanic substratum absorbed for some time, as is shown especially by archaeological finds. We refer to the numerous sword sheaths, amphora handles and objects with stylized figures of the "tree of life", buckles in disk form with human or bird heads, recalling motifs which are North Euroasiatic and Siberian in origin. Very specific too are some finds of great importance, such as the statuette of a horse with a human head on the cover of a jug found in the tomb of a princess at Reinheim (Saar) (2nd half of the 5th century B.C.) (Kruta 1987: 26). They are the same shamanic motifs which are also found in sagas. We are concerned with a complex web of emblems of shamanic derivation concerning solar cults, the cyclic "renovatio" of nature, traditions connected with sacred flora, the concept of the head as seat of the immortal soul, birds, especially aquatic, as "vehicles" of initiatory transformation, of the horse as forefather of human beings, considered at the same time both as animal psychopomp and instrument of initiation towards the kingdom of the sun. The Celtic warrior Cu Chulainn, an initiate right from his childhood, in fact owned two magic horses, one black, symbol of night, the other white, symbol of the day (Mac Culloch 1992: 135), in whose double power the shamanic stamp seems present without any doubt. The worship of horses became widespread also among the ancient inhabitants of Veneto, who sacrificed in honour of Diomedes a white horse (Strabone 1993: 66–67), which is undoubtedly of solar and uranic symbology evoking the Ugric or Thracian type. With regard to the white horse found among the Celts, we cannot omit mentioning the gigantic white chalk horse in the county of Wiltshire in South West England.

The cult of the head with shamanic connotations has left a particular testimony among the Celts in the West and Scythians in the East (Jettmar 1964: 26–27). As far as the Celtic area is concerned it is sufficient to think of the famous Tarasque from Noves (Bouches-du-Rhône), which places its front claws on two bearded heads, of the human skulls found in the *oppidum* of Puig Castelar, of the necklace with its relief of twelve heads in the Celtic-Ligurian sanctuary at Entremont (Filip 1987: 165–168) or the jewellery which present the motif of the human or animal head, and is even found in the phalerae (ornamental plaques used in the trappings of horses). We refer to the phalerae discovered at Manerbio in Italy, decorated with human heads in ovoid form, belonging to a complex recognized as Celtic (first half of the first century B.C.) (Arslan 1979: 112–113). In the Celtic sagas in which, among other things, many heroes with shamanic connotations appear, the motif of the oracular head is also to be found: for instance,

the head of the giant Bran of the *Mabinogion*, which was cut off of his own will, an emblem of defence and fertility (Agrati and Magini 1982: 45–47). Because of the magic properties of his head, Bran was compared with the god Cernunnos with three heads and the stag horns which renewed themselves perennially. The cult of the head as a symbol of vital force and wisdom also found expression in the field of martyrology and legend, such as the one known in the Abruzzi and Molise of the custom of young girls to turn towards the East on the morning of June 24th to see on the disc of the rising sun the face of the decapitated head of St. John: the first girl to see it would marry within the year (Cattabiani 1991: 237). Therefore an oracular function is attributed to the severed head. Regarding archaeological evidence it is interesting to note how, from the excavations carried out in the Slav area, it emerges that in the areas which were reached by the Finno-Ugric peoples, the heads were buried in a separate chamber. The acquisition of shamanic ideas concerning the head appears well rooted in funeral customs.

As to the workers of sacred acts in the Western European area, with the role of the Roman *pontifex* as "costruttore sacrale di una *via varcante l'acqua*" ("sacred constructor of a *road which crosses water*") (Seppilli 1990: 39), "manipolatore del sacrale-pericoloso" ("manipulator of the sacred-dangerous") (Seppilli 1990: 256) has been connected the Western European motif of the saint who uses a "magic assistant", that is the devil, to construct the bridge. From legends, which reached as far as the shores of the Adriatic, about "Devil's bridges" or bridges linked with saints there emerges the theme of the dangerous bridge and water, to be understood as an initiatory "passage".

Ecstasy founded on communication with the hereafter has left us many traces even in the beliefs of Adriatic peoples.

A case in question is that of the depiction on a mosaic floor of the cathedral of Otranto (1163–1165) of King Arthur seated on the back of an animal similar to a large male goat. According to popular tradition he was leading an array of dead souls of the "wild hunt" (Ginzburg 1989: 85 Table 4). In origin the goat was not an animal connected with the devil, but was sacrificed in rituals related to death and resurrection and was often presented in pictorial compositions associated with the sacred tree (Gimbutas 1990: 233). The representation in Otranto reminds us not only of Celtic legends but also of myths in the shamanic area. One must refer, with regard to this matter, to the most famous ecstatic experiences of women who, riding on the back of animals, took part in the "wild hunt", guided by a female divinity, the bringer of plenty and prosperity, sometimes with an "asimmetria deambulatoria" ("irregular gait") to be related to "uno strato sotterraneo di mitologia euroasiatica" ("a substratum of Euroasiatic mythology") (Ginzburg 1989: XIX, 79, 173, 241). It is interesting to note that even the Befana was considered to have difficulty in walking, as would also appear from a Venetian nursery rhyme (Goi 1991: 103). However, "a consolidare il mito del corteo di Diana contribuì certamente la credenza del volo notturno verso il sabba" ("to consolidate the myth of Diana's cortège there is certainly the contribution of the night flight to the sabbath") of the witches; thus following demonization this goddess was debased to the level of the diabolic (Centini 1994: 101, 106).

The Abruzzi region also preserves in the territory along the Adriatic a rich pagan heritage of extreme interest, the result of the circulation of ideas collected and handed down by shepherds who with their flocks went down as far as the sheep tracks of the Tavoliere in Puglia. In the Abruzzi traces have been left of the archaic belief in the "language of the animals" (this is widespread in many European Medieval legends), which is connected with the secret language of the shamans acquired by eating the flesh of animals. This was considered to be the seat of the souls of the dead. In Civitella

del Tronto, on Christmas Eve after dusk it is forbidden to go into the stables and henhouses, because the animals, after being well fed, must be left free to talk with Christ and relate how they have been treated by humans. To this taboo we can add the prohibition of extinguishing the block of oakwood which must remain lit on the hearth until the following morning. It was only on that evening that the women in the family could pass on from the eldest to the youngest those prayers muttered to drive away the effects of malicious envy. We are faced with beliefs and practices of a magic night, named St. John's night, which are also transferred due to Christian influence to the winter solstice. In certain parts of the Abruzzi people still prepare the personal amulet for a new-born child (generally with a sacred medal and magic elements, some of which must remain unknown) inside a little cotton bag. The bag is made up by the oldest woman in the family. Similarly in the shamanic field it was the oldest woman who had a special role in birth rituals in that she chose the name to be given to the new born child, a name which corresponded with that of the ancestor reincarnated in him. In the Abruzzi there also exists the figure of the "mad-wise man" with oracular connotations who possessed his own magic dimension. They are beliefs which reveal an affinity, in some aspects surprising, with those which are widespread in the shamanic field.

As far as the Medieval legend of Cola Pesce is concerned, a legend which is quite widespread in Sicily (Calvino 1991: 713–715), and would seem to have developed in Puglia in the legend of St. Nicholas of Bari, there has been a probable fusion of Greek and Nordic myth, specifically Norman (Seppilli 1990: 309–348). It tells of a young man who was forced, through his mother's curse, to live in the middle of the sea where, according to some versions, he appears with the characteristics of a fish, while substantially remaining a man, protector of sailors, endowed with the ability to predict storms, and is always travelling inside big fish from which he emerges by cutting their belly with a knife (Seppilli 1990: 296–297). Almost certainly the Normans descended into Italy bringing with them Breton and Germanic legends (Seppilli 1990: 325), which in their turn were influenced by shamanic paganism, just as happened with Greek myths. Perhaps St. Nicholas, as Anita Seppilli argues, was an archaic water divinity (who was connected with initiatory rites) (Seppilli 1990: 311, 313). It is no coincidence that, especially in Northern Europe, the protector of youths, celebrated on the 6th December, is St. Nicholas himself. In certain parts of Hungary, on St. Nicholas Day, children received the *Nyírfa Kisasszony* (Miss Birch), that is a bundle of birch branches which evidently had magic functions. The link between St. Nicholas and students is very widespread, in particular in Germany: the student elected king during student feasts had to represent the Saint by riding a white horse. In the "alter ego" which accompanied St. Nicholas and punished naughty children in Saxony certain people identify the old Odin. In Poland, Moravia and Upper Silesia children believed that St. Nicholas came down from the sky with the help of a gold rope and rode around on a white horse distributing presents. The Saint, who was considered a wise medium (Minerva Pinto 1987: 335–336) on various occasions, reminds us of a similar scenario to that of the shaman, even for the totemic references. Our thoughts are directed towards Ugric mythology and specifically to the bear as protector and ancestor which the heavenly father sent down on earth as his representative of the truth by means of a fire chain (Bovina Lentini 1987: 8–10).

Charles W. Jones, despite his tendency to believe that the various names of Nick, Nikke, Nikker and Nix were a desanctified Nicholas, and that Nicholas as an elf or spirit was not very ancient, has not excluded an eventual connection between St. Nicholas and a primitive "water spirit", even bringing to our attention his numerous recent

attributes (Jones 1983: 311, 324). For all his doubts, he noted in traditions and legends about the Saint "a certain meaning of propitiation of animals, a feeling of the worship of ancestors and the dead" (Jones 1983: 324–325). The scholar was not able to deny that the children's hero of the Christmas period in particular had an "alter ego" with various aspects, partly derived from folklore and masks, but also partly from the pre-Christian world (Jones 1983: 319, 321).

In the figure of the thaumaturge Nicholas of Lycia, the author of very well known miracles[1], such as that of the three young men who were cut into pieces and then recreated (which reminds us of the initiatory dismemberment of the shaman candidate), in our opinion, there was an undoubted confluence of traditions which were very closely connected with an ancient mythical foundation of shamanic beliefs, surviving in the spiritual culture of the peoples of Eurasia in diverse forms.

These do not wholly hide, despite the superimposition, the original magic-ritual matrix and the concepts of initiation which remained well-rooted for centuries in popular sensibility. In the field of the most archaic Western vampirism, however, echoes of traditions from the East arrived in a more diluted form or sporadically (Corradi Musi 1995).

It was in the modern historical "cultural fashion" of the vampire, originating in the wake of the news of the terrible witch trials, that attention was awakened in the West to magic acts from Magyar territory and the areas where they were widespread. Too little was still known of the traditions of other Finno-Ugric peoples. It was Hungary that took on the function of "bridge" at the level of exchanges in mythical and magic concepts, which had already been enacted, but only initially, by many vehicles of cultural transmission (Corradi Musi 1993: 75–85). Once more the ideas of shamanic stamp, in the case of the vampire "in corpore", which is so different from the ghost vampire of popular western imagination, influenced European magic beliefs, right in the age of the triumph of illuministic rationalism.

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[1] He was first revered as a Saint in the East (in the 6th century) and later in the West, as patron of Bari, Ancona, Venice, Merano, Sassari, Sicily and Russia (Cappa Bava and Jacomuzzi 1989: 163). His name was corrupted into "Santa Claus" in the Anglo-Saxon area.

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Finno-Ugric Shamanic Beliefs and Traditions in Three Important 13th Century Sources

The Hungarian Dominican monk Fra Iulianus, the forerunner of Marco Polo, to whom the Hungarian writer János Kodolányi dedicated a novel which has also been translated into Italian, made interesting references to the Mordvinians. During his return from his first journey in "Magna Hungaria", which he made in 1236 at the instigation of King Béla IV, he travelled by boat along the Bjelaja and the Kama rivers, reached the confluence of the Volga and at the end of July arrived in the territory of the Mordvinians where he stopped for about two days. In the account of the journey written by the monk Richardus to the bishop of Perugia, a legate of Pope Gregory IX, entitled *Descriptio itineris prioris fr. Iuliani a fr. Richardo* and kept in the Archives of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome (Miscell. Arm. XV T. 1) we read with regard to this people:

> sunt pagani, et adeo homines crudeles, qui pro nichilo reputatur homo ille, qui multos homines non occidit; et cum aliquis in via procedit, omnium hominum capita, quos occidit, coram ipso portantur, et quanto plura coram uno quoque portantur capita, tanto melior reputatur; de capitibus vero hominum cifos faciunt, et libentius inde bibunt. Uxorem ducere non permittitur, qui hominem non occidit
>
> (they are pagans, and such cruel men that a man who has not killed many men is not at all respected; and when somebody goes along a road, the heads of all the men he has killed are carried in front of him, and the more heads that are carried before him the better he is considered; in fact they make goblets out of the heads of these men, and they drink from them with considerable pleasure. A man is not allowed to get married until he has killed another man) (Szentpétery 1938: 541–542).

We do not know to what extent these statements by Fra Iulianus correspond with the truth. What he reported might be exaggerated, in view of the fact that Guillaume de Rubruquis, a member of the order of Fratres Minores, who in 1253 visited the same people, did not make any reference to their ferocity. We should bear in mind the probable descendance of the Mordvinians from the Androphagi of Herodotus, thus called because they ate human flesh (Erodoto 1994: 206–207, 284–285, Book IV 18, 106). There could be in this statement, even if it is overstated, a basis of truth. However, it is true that information supplied to the Greek historian by merchants who travelled in the 5th century B.C. along the route, which was later followed by European missionaries towards China, is rather fantastic. Nevertheless, it is true that those statements could have been dictated, at least in part, by phenomena of a symbolic anthropophagy which characterized the shamanic vision of the world, in particular several Mordvinian supernatural entities. In the Finno-Ugric field, human sacrifices could be requested even by the spirits which protected cities or individual buildings, as popular ballads testify.

At the same time we must not underestimate the fact that the cult of the skull was widespread in antiquity in many areas, even in Western Europe.

In particular we can quote the skulls, probably of horses, found by the Romans in the Teutoberg Forest (they were nailed by the Cimbri to the branches of trees as offerings) (Derolez 1962: 71) or what Livy related in his work *Ab Urbe condita* (Livio 1995: 454–457, Book XXIII 24, 6–13) about the Gallic Boi who in 216 defeated the consul L. Postumius Albinus in the "Litana silva" and then cut off his head and covered it with gold and then transformed it into a drinking cup to be used during solemn libations, after it had been consecrated in a temple. Such a consecration is a variant of the Celtic custom of hanging the skull of an enemy defeated in battle on the door of a house (Zecchini 1984: 34). The cult of human heads, which is of parashamanic stamp and was widespread all over the Celtic area, confirms the ancient reports among the Proto-Uralic and Proto-Indoeuropean peoples especially since the latter originally lived probably on the border of the Urals (Herm 1988: 104–105). In the case of the head hunters of the Philippines (Frazer 1963: 433), trophies encouraged the growth of crops, while for the ancient Euroasiatic hunters the head of a man was desirable for more spiritual and individual purposes. It was considered a symbol of vital force and wisdom and consequently of great prestige for the man who managed to obtain it. The Finno-Ugrians like the Celts (Le Roux–Guyonvarc'h 1990: 120) decapitated the enemy's head to obstruct the eventual healing on earth and thus assure the passing of the powers of the defeated onto themselves. In the Finno-Ugric shamanic field the acquisition of a skull assumed a special meaning in so far as, with the heart, it was considered the seat of the "second soul" of the victims at least until the moment of death. Tribes such as the Finns and the Voguls used to hang the skulls of slaughtered bears on a sacred tree with the intention of helping the passage to the hereafter of the immortal soul of these totemic animals.

Connected with the worship of the head there is also the importance in folklore of headwear, which was already a fundamental element in shamanic apparatus (as can be observed in popular songs and ancient ceremonial traditions) and it often reproduced the features of the head of zoomorphic creatures of which the worker of sacred acts was the incarnation during trance. The powers of the head were extended even to the hair (Donner 1920: 3): it increased its properties if it was long. In shamanic clothing the motif of ribbons hung behind the head was connected with the wish to lengthen the hair symbolically (Donner 1920: 12), apart from the representation of the feathers of totemic birds. The ribbons hanging from popular Finno-Ugric headgear seem to be a reference to the same symbology.

Fra Iulianus did not have the means of discovering during his brief stay of approximately 20 days among the Hungarians of Bjelaja the complex manifestation of their beliefs, especially those concerning their ancestors. In fact he reported that they were pagans, but mistakenly added that they did not worship idols (Szentpétery 1938: 540). Furthermore he considered that they knew nothing about God. In reality, however these Hungarians worshipped an all powerful God. The words *Hadúr* ("Lord of the armies") and *magyarok istene* ("God of the Hungarians") date back to very ancient times. The Hungarians may have received information via the Byzantines. On the other hand Muslims were widespread in this country. It was to "Magna Hungaria" also known as Baskardia, the probable territory of the *Jürka* of Herodotus (Erodoto 1994: 208–209 Book IV 22), that the Hungarian tribes had migrated after the dissolution of the Bulgar-Turkish empire caused by the Kazars in the middle of the 7th century. Following the Mongol invasion of 1237, "Magna Hungaria" ceased to exist and the Hungarians were assimilated with the neighbouring peoples. As far as Ugric shamanism is

concerned the Arab traveller Ahmed Ibn Fadlân had already discovered among the Hungarians of Asia the worship of snakes, cranes and fish, all animals with particular magic significance. The immortal soul of the deceased used to be transformed into a reptile, fish or bird in order to reach the kingdom of the beyond. The worship which Fadlân referred to must have a totemic connotation. He had supplied this information in the account of his journey in 921, in the capacity of secretary to the embassy sent by the Abassid Caliph Muqtadir to the king of the Bulgars of the Volga (Conrad 1958: 41–145).

The statement about idol worship on the part of the Finno-Ugrians by the German chronicler Heinrich of Livonia with regard to the Livonians (Pirotti 1970: 111) among whom he stayed for a long period appears to be more reliable than that of Fra Iulianus. In the so-called *Henrici Chronicon Lyvoniae* of the 13th century, while pursuing his interest in pagan rites of a propitiatory or apotropaic nature and in the cult of animism he revealed that the Livonians used to sacrifice animals, in particular dogs and he-goats (Arbusow and Bauer 1955: 108. 25). What he wrote about the Estonians is considerably different from Tacitus' observation in his *De origine et situ Germanorum* (Tacito 1995: 287–293 45). According to the Latin historian, as a part of their ritual practices they carried the images of boars as a protection against their enemies and worshipped the "Mother" of the gods, i.e. the Mother Earth thus confirming the gynaecocratic origins of Finno-Ugric shamanism, traces of which still remain in their tradition and mythology. Heinrich emphasized the ferocity of the Estonians and observed that the inhabitants of Saccalia actually took out the heart of a Danish magistrate, a certain Hebbus, while he was still alive in order to cook it on the fire and then eat it for the purpose of providing themselves with strength against the Christians (Arbusow and Bauer 1955: 190. 10–17). Obviously the eating of the hearts, which is the seat of the "free soul" meant increasing the capacity of ones own "second soul". Of the rich pantheon of the Estonians, he reported only the god Tharapita (Arbusow and Bauer 1955: 175. 10, 218. 27, 220. 30, 221. 14, 222. 2). Heinrich was also impressed by the extravagant libations of the Estonians during their traditional ceremonies (Pirotti 1970: 114). He noted in particular that they exhumed bodies buried in cemeteries to cremate them according to pagan practice (Arbusow and Bauer 1955: 191. 14–16). However, what is interesting is not so much the cremation as the exhumation of corpses. The latter concealed the fear that they were not decomposed, i.e. completely destroyed, and consequently could be subject to transformation into vampires instead of into a natural reincarnation according to the shamanic concept.

As far as totemism is concerned an important clue is to be found in a direct Hungarian source. In about 1270, Simon Kézai emphasized in his *Gesta Hungarorum* the legend of the Turul (Szentpétery 1937: 152), the totemic bird connected with the origins of the Magyar dynasty. The association of a clan with a totem in the form of an animal or at times a plant was a phenomenon typical of ancient Finno-Ugric society. It was the Votyaks who in particular called the various clans with names derived from birds, the most important of which was the swan. The representation of totemic animals was common in the decorative motifs of a popular nature. A large number of bowls in the form of a goose's foot, still preserved in the Zansailon collection of Helsinki, were found in the Kama basin. Tribal chieftains used the image of their totems as a tattoo on their arms. The distinctive sign, or *tamga*, among many brotherhoods was that of a bird (Hoppál 1978: 390). This type of ideographic writing among the Ob-Ugrians had many functions, and if painted on drums or on skins for ritual purposes, acquired a deeply magical meaning in as much as it was an expression of shamanic totemism.

Heinrich of Livonia and Simon Kézai in their references to contemporary shamanic culture contribute to the clarification of some elements with a spirituality which also left traces on history. Fra Iulianus, in spite of the fact that he did not know about the worship of idols by the Hungarians of the Bjelaja, with his true item of information about the head cutters of the Mordvinians, fills a gap in the reconstruction of a complex original picture of the shamanic vision of the world and its diffusion in the West European world.

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Shamanism and Magic in a 16th Century Chronicle

In the *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* of the Swede Olof Månsonn, more familiarly known in the Latin form Olaus Magnus, much information is found about the animism of Northern peoples which was still flourishing in the 16th century. He had the distinction of being an archbishop, and although he was not able to profit from the fact, as an historian he did not scorn reporting considerably valuable information on the ethnography and paganism of peoples who were mostly unknown. He dwelt in particular on the Lapps after obtaining with great effort information from the reports of the early missionaries in their pioneering task of Christianization, and also from the muddled accounts of fur traders. His statements on the Lapps which were to intrigue so much Francesco Negri, a Ravenna priest, author of the *Viaggio settentrionale*, clearly reflected also the legends born of popular fantasy, whose fascination was to have a profound influence on the opinion of Westerners and the first descriptions related closely to cartographical works, including those of Giovanni Botero, which are particularly well documented on the Finno-Ugric peoples.

Above all Olaus concentrated his attention on the Bjarmi, defining them as idolaters. These people, who belonged to the Baltic Finnish group, were identified by scholars in many cases. Our historian, however, as can be deduced from his famous *Carta marina* ("Maritime Map") of 1539, referred to the inhabitants of the so-called "Bjarmia ulterior" ("Further Bjarmia"), situated on the Kola peninsula, and not those of "Bjarmia citerior" ("Nearer Bjarmia"), which was nearer to Scandinavia (Loikala 1987: 42–43). He stated that the Bjarmi influenced the outcomes of battles by means of magic, provoked rain at will and were skilled in bewitching men. Through witchcraft they were capable of striking their victims to such an extent that they were no longer in control of their own minds and often were reduced to such thinness that they died (Magnus 1555: 10). The Bjarmi, he pointed out, resorted to magic also in the struggle against a powerful Danish King Regner, unleashing (just as the "storm witches" did) a violent storm which hindered their adversary in obtaining supplies by sea. The Danish invasion was further obstructed by the outbreak of an extraordinary heat-wave (1555: 130–131).

Olaus in fact dedicated a whole chapter to Lappish shamanism. He stated first of all that the Northern peoples were expert not only in sorcery but also in aeromancy, geomancy, pyromancy and necromancy. Among the various systems used in divination were to be found those which were common to other peoples, such as the analysis of the movements of beasts and birds (1555: 114–115).

He pointed out that aquatic birds on dry land presaged storms while terrestrial birds over the water were a symptom of an imminent clear sky (1555: 695). In particular Lappish wizards were able to foresee even far into the future the state of affairs existing between friends and enemies, and by the power of their spells knew how to locate faraway objects. Their deceitful wizards were clever at transforming the appearance of others with extraordinary metamorphoses (1555: 121).

Among the Lapps' magic instruments of special significance were bronze snakes and frogs, the anvil and the hammer: they were of help in reaching ecstasy which it

was absolutely essential not to be disturbed by any living being, not even a mosquito or a fly. The information about the trance obtained by hammering the bronze snake and frog on the anvil was taken up by Calmet who, about two centuries later, chose from among his most revered sources the work of Olaus Magnus (Calmet 1986: 70). These animals symbolised the forms with which, in Finno-Ugric shamanic ideology, the immortal soul of man was able to reach the hereafter. The neighbouring Finns actually worshipped tame snakes, while the Lapps used the frog for medicinal purposes. In particular they wrapped a frog covered in salt in a piece of white linen, which was later cut up and boiled in milk to be drunk as a medicine for sore throats. The so-called "bald frog" could also heal imperfections of the skin. Furthermore it was strictly forbidden to be ironic about frogs, in so far as this would imply their vendetta (Turi 1980: 220–221). The anvil and the hammer which functioned as the drum and relative drumstick were, not by chance, vital objects to the blacksmith, the active principle of creation and transformation, depository of heavenly secrets, worker of magic par excellence, ambivalent and similar to the shaman even from the point of view of initiation.

According to Olaus, the spirit, i.e. the "second soul" of a person in a state of trance, carried as a witness of his journey, made under the guidance of a demon, a ring or a knife. The capacity of exorcism of the ring, a special amulet, was enforced by its association with the knife and was probably connected with the symbolism of iron, and could banish evil forces of any origin, not only those of the hereafter.

The writer, in his affirmation that ecstasy occurred with the help of a wicked spirit, allowed himself to be influenced by the widespread stories about Lappish "black magic". It is well known that during trance the shaman was guided by supporting spirits who were entirely beneficent. The rituals of Northern Finno-Ugric animism, like those of other neighbouring peoples, were prevalently if not exclusively manifestations of "white magic".

Olaus added that the Lapps had magic lead arrows, the length of fingers, which they used in vendettas – they were very dangerous because they inflicted terrible wounds on legs and arms (1555: 121–122).

In defining the spiritual culture of the Lapps as superstition, the historian displayed an interpretation of their beliefs which was erroneous. He judged them from the standpoint of his own Catholic doctrines, in a hostile but understandable spirit which was scarcely suited to an appreciation of the original motivations of shamanism. In their state of isolation from a civil society which was technologically advanced, the Lapps continued to hand down the jealously preserved traditions of their ancestors. In his description of their worship our historian did not even make any reference to their devotion to the bear which is one of the animals considered to be totemic par excellence. In his opinion, they fervently worshipped the sun since it was a source of light and banished long periods of darkness and extreme cold. In similar manner they continued to direct their prayers to the moon (whose worship was later to be abandoned), because it used to lighten the dark winter nights. They also considered as divine, because of its red colour similar to blood, even a piece of material hung on a pole or mast. The Lapps, according to Olaus, were convinced they would become better hunters of wild beasts if they drank the blood of the ones they had already killed. The writer commented that many ancient tribes were particularly fond of the colour red – the Romans, for example, regarded it as a symbol of triumph. Among all the peoples of Northern Europe and particularly the Finno-Ugrians, the shamanic symbolism of red as rebirth was very widespread. Just like the "mad" Egyptians or others, the inhabitants of the North worshipped birds, a variety of animals, fish, snakes and worms. In

Lappish wedding ceremony with fire. Publ. Magnus, O. (1555), *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Roma: Viottus (p. 140). Property of the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, catalogue number: 2 IV 22585; photographed "by permission of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali" (Ministry of Culture and the Environment).

the winter season the Lapps, in their meetings, collected the bones of forest animals and big fish and burnt them in honour of the gods, but in summer did not practise similar rituals because they were afraid to make fun of the light and heat of the sun: this behaviour was considered as useless by Olaus.

He noted that in the absence of incense, milled grain mixed with salt was sprinkled on the victim during sacrifices made for auspices (1555: 98–99); the latter clearly consecrated and at the same time purified the victim. The scholar displayed a certain scorn with regard to the customary practices of this people which had remained in a backward state of civilisation.

The Lapps understood their relationship with supernatural beings only in concrete terms of sacrifices and rituals carried out with the help of well-determined amulets, and prayers consisting in precise requests void of abstract thoughts. The latter were completely different in their content from the typical prayers of positive religions which, according to Olaus, were the only ones which were a sign of civilisation. Our historian was not suitably prepared to make a correct interpretation except superficially, of the deep meaning, both existential and social, of shamanism.

Instead he described with surprising respect, certain Lappish traditions such as those related to the celebration of marriage, in which fire had a role of primary importance. In fact the symbolic and magic significance of fire, the element of purification, regeneration and fertility through light and heat is beyond question.

In marriage rites, however, the clockwise movement around the hearth on the part of the bride was Indoeuropean in origin. Among the Finno-Ugrians and Slavs this circular movement was for the most part "imperfect" and it had as its fulcrum a torch or candle, and even the holy corner of the house or the house itself (Gasparini 1958: 80, 84, 99).

The Finnish wizards' three magic knots of the winds. Publ. Magnus, O. (1555), *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Roma: Viottus (p. 119). Property of the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, catalogue number: 2 IV 22585; photographed "by permission of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali" (Ministry of Culture and the Environment)

The information about the Finns, of which Olaus had personal knowledge, appears undoubtedly more precise. While expatiating on their magic and their harmful practices, he stated that they were always anxious to know about the future and allowed themselves to be conditioned by prophecies. If they turned out favourable, they were happy in the name of a vain hope; if, instead, they were negative, they gave way to despondency.

The historian noted moreover that Finnish wizards sold the wind to sailors and for a due reward supplied them with three magic knots: the first was to be untied so as to have moderate winds, the second to make them stronger, and the third to obtain a very strong wind (1555: 119). This item of information was also reported by Calmet (1986: 70).

Olaus Magnus did not make any reference to the magic beliefs of other Northern Finno-Ugrians, with the exception of those pages in which he wrote on the transformation of men into wolves, a widespread phenomenon in Livonia (1555: 642–644). Werewolves, terrible in their ferocity, attacked men, domestic animals and even isolated buildings in the woods. They used to meet at a particular period of the year at a ruined castle, where they measured their skill in leaping. If they failed to jump over a wall, they were whipped by the presiding werewolf.

Several powerful men in those lands were subject to metamorphosis into wolves. This evil was verified with the reciting of appropriate magic formulae and by the consumption of barley beer. In this regard we must not forget that beer was frequently used in rites of "passage". Olaus reported outstanding examples of such a metamorphosis. When a noblemen and his entourage were on a long journey in the woods, at dusk it could happen that one of the servants, who were fully aware of this magic device, in order to overcome his hunger, after insisting on total silence on the part of the others and after hiding himself from the looks of others, was transformed into a

wolf and attacked any flocks that happened to come along. Having carried his prey to his fellow servants, who were grateful but at the same time aware of what had happened, the werewolf, once more isolated from everyone, resumed his human form. Olaus even reported that shortly before this the wife of a nobleman argued with one of her servants, of whom there was a disgraceful abundance, maintaining that the metamorphosis of men into wolves was not possible.

The servant wished to give an immediate demonstration of the contrary. Entering a kind of cellar, he emerged in the form of a wolf, but had to run away towards the wood because he was pursued by dogs who gouged out one of his eyes, despite the fact that he defended himself with great energy. The following day the servant returned to his mistress in human form, but with one eye only. If a werewolf was subjected to mutilation, this persisted even when he resumed his normal form, and if he was killed, could no longer appear with a human aspect. In Prussia, the historian observed, it was however decided to burn possible werewolves in order to exterminate them.

This item of information from Olaus Magnus concerning the werewolf who lost his eye confirms certain undeniable parallels, at least on the formal plane of manifestations of a magical nature, between the workers of sacred acts in Western Europe and those of the Finno-Ugrians. It brings to mind immediately similar facts which befell the witches of the witch-trials.

The increasing activities of demonology and their wide-scale circulation obsessed the West and influenced men of letters and scholars.

The alternative culture of the occult sciences, which was present both at popular and élite levels, whether denigrated or supported, left clear traces in 16th century civilisation and aroused a certain curiosity on the part even of erudite men who were by virtue of their education opposed to it, such as Olaus Magnus.

The metamorphosis of men into wolves. Publ. Magnus, O. (1555), *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, Roma: Viottus (p. 643). Property of the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, catalogue number: 2 IV 22585; photographed "by permission of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali" (Ministry of Culture and the Environment).

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Shamanism and Vampirism in the *Dissertazioni* of Calmet

The *Dissertazioni sopra le apparizioni de' spiriti e sopra i vampiri o i redivivi d'Ungheria, di Moravia ec.* of the Abbé Augustin Calmet, which has been recently reprinted, forms a unique source of information taken from letters and ancient texts, and is considerably valuable for the analysis of Finno-Ugric shamanism.

The original edition of the work, which was translated from the French of the second edition, came out in Italian in Venice in 1756, probably thanks to the climate of religious tolerance and opposition to the Roman Catholic Church existing in that city.

In the first part of his work Calmet, referring openly to the *Lapponia* of Johannes Schefferus (1673), described a typical Lappish shamanic séance for the purpose of divination (Calmet 1986: 33). He underlined the importance of the role of the drum which the shaman used to beat with a two-pronged hammer made of bone, causing several brass rings to move. In the meantime the women who were present chanted a song which was then taken up by men during the entire period of the ecstasy, because it was believed that an unexpected silence or a loud noise could cause the death of the shaman. Calmet added that Lappish magicians used the drum also to establish the cause of an illness or to take away the strength or even the life of enemies. They kept in a kind of leather pouch special magic flies which they caused to fly against their enemies or their cattle when necessary. Furthermore they used them to let loose strong winds or frightening storms. The Lapps also had a kind of arrow which when shot into the air destroyed everything it struck: they also had a deadly ball to throw at their adversaries, and this killed any human or animal in its path.

In describing Lappish magic in rather gloomy colours Calmet was clearly exaggerating, because we know that this people, who believed in shamanism, mainly practised "white magic" just like other similar peoples. However it is true that at times, in order to obtain beneficial results, such as healing, the shaman had to strike potential enemies, and in such circumstances "black magic" became complementary to "white magic".

The thought of Calmet, however, was undoubtedly influenced by the reputation which the Lapps had of being magicians and wizards in the public opinion of Western Europe, and which was spread by the accounts of travellers.

Calmet, who was still tied to the myth of human nature having a divine origin and therefore identical in various societies, noticed the affinities existing between the vampirism of Finno-Ugric and Slav origin and the phenomenon of the living dead, which was known in some degree everywhere, but did not understand the basic differences: vampirism in close connection with the practice of the "second burial" was in fact the result of the shamanic concept on the basis of which death was not the end but a way towards rebirth. The latter was possible only if death occurred in a perfect way, with the putrefaction of the body before the final burial. If a person could not be reincarnated, he did not take part in the conservation of the race: instead he constituted a danger for the survival of the tribe: this survival was necessary for the safeguard of the ancient societies of peoples of shamanic belief, such as the Finno-Ugrians. It was precisely for this reason that the non-decomposed corpse, that is a corpse which

had not reached complete death, the only premise for a new life, was regarded as a serious obstacle which unhinged the harmonious sequence of life and death, and was of fundamental importance in the shamanic vision of existence. In Roumania exhumation took place seven years after the first burial: it is not a coincidence that the number seven indicates the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one.[1] In Roumanian beliefs the universe needed death to regenerate life and contained within itself under the surface of the earth an "anti-univers opposé à la vie" ("anti-universe opposed to life"), which was in direct contrast to the organized universe on the surface because of the decomposition which corpses were made to suffer there. In the anti-universe occurred

> la rencontre cosmique entre les âmes des morts et les esprits malfaisants du chaos primordial
>
> (the cosmic meeting between the souls of the departed and the evil spirits of primordial chaos) (Cremene 1981: 96–97).

The vampire is situated in the setting of this

> conflit entre le monde et l'antimonde et l'opposition entre lui et les vivants devient fondamentale
>
> (conflict between the world and the anti-world and the opposition between him and the living becomes fundamental) (Cremene 1981: 13).

Montague Summers rightly stated that around the theme of the vampire in Roumania are united "almost all the beliefs and superstitions that prevail throughout the whole of Eastern Europe" (Summers 1980: 301). In particular, in the field of shamanism the vampire was the counterpart of the shaman: he possessed the characteristics of the shaman but he directed them to opposite ends. Just as "black" and "white magic" were complementary, so were the figures of the vampire and the shaman: as the priest of "black magic" the vampire obstructed the natural flow of life, whereas the shaman helped humans by putting them in communication with the knowledge of supernatural spirits and the dead, in most cases through forms of "white magic". It is not a coincidence that the "living vampire" of Roumania, that is a person predestined to become a vampire with the capacity of separating his own soul from the body, just like the shaman, possessed special powers such as the power of creating bad weather or of metamorphosis into different animals, assuming qualities very similar to those of the witch (Summers 1980: 30–308) or those of the spectres of the ancient Greeks, such as the bloody Empusa who loved to assume various forms or Lamia and Gello, a type of vampire who brought about the death of newly born babies.

In the Finno-Ugric field the dead vampire, continuing to live in the human dimension which it could not escape, was to be considered an enemy of life as conceived by the principles of shamanism. Therefore it is depicted in popular fantasy as a monster on the hunt for new victims, who would suffer the same fate as enemies of the tribe or the family. The belief that the vampire liked first of all to strike its closest relations by sucking their blood, thus depriving them of their life force is significant.

On the other hand the superstition of obtaining life by means of blood has very ancient roots and is testified to even in the "Odyssey": in Limbo, in fact, Odysseus made his companions fill a hole with the blood of sheep which had been sacrificed to Hades and Persephone in order to give energy to the shades (Omero 1959: 232–233

[1] We mention the ominous prophecy (known in ancient Slav popular tradition also, thanks to Orthodox influence) of the "seventh millennium" as the end of the world.

XI, 49–74). The blood of the living as a symbol of vital energy appears also in "The Bible" (Pasquero 1968: 216). Draining the blood of the newborn before burning them was a form of ritual murder which seems to have been practised by Byzantine heretics of the 11th century: they used the blood for their own baptism (Psello 1985: 7, 29). Furthermore, blood was not only considered as the vehicle of life in the shamanic field, but also as the vehicle of the soul: to suck blood meant looking for a metaphysical food, i.e. the human soul (Cremene 1981: 101, 103).

A hotch-potch of Romantic variations then made the figure of the vampire even more gross, changing the nature of its true characteristics, above all in the countries in which it spread through importation: it was in the Medieval period in particular that the vampire acquired diabolic features and in most cases was made to coincide with a dead person who had been excommunicated or who had not been baptized. A similar process occurred in Eastern Europe following the excommunications inflicted by the rival Roman and Greek Orthodox Churches.

In popular tradition the vampire and the living dead became more and more similar: the legends about the dead who return were in fact legends of the devil (Di Giacomo 1957: 171–215).

Writing about Hungarian vampires, Calmet distinguished between the "active" and "passive vampires" (corresponding to the "living vampires" of Roumania), i.e. those from whom blood had been sucked in life and would have become "active vampires" after death (Calmet 1986: 174). Vampires were substantially a different kind of being and struck fear into people by reason of their diversity.

It was in the 18th century that fear of vampires spread throughout Europe and people began to open up tombs to verify the decomposition or incorruptibility of suspect corpses. At the same time methods of destroying vampires transmitted by popular tradition began to spread.

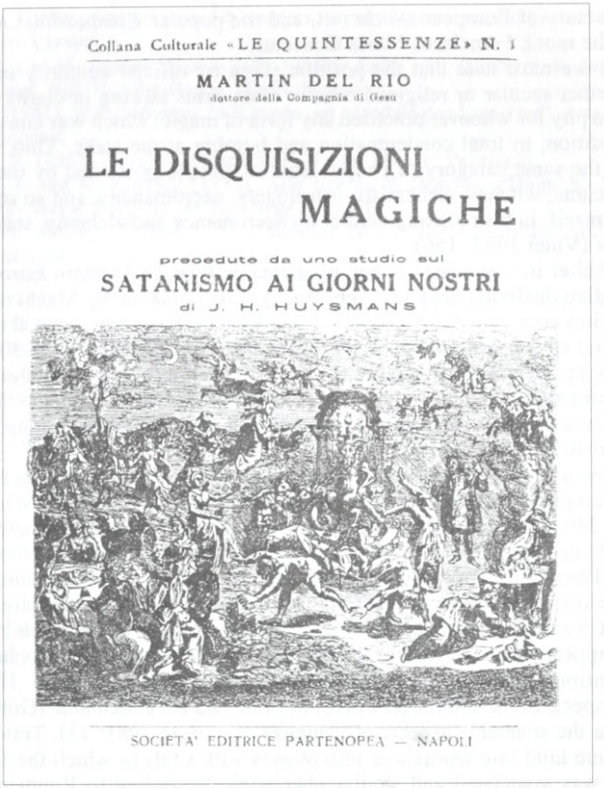
Calmet mentions a Turkish vampire who attacked a certain Arnold Paul near Kassa in Hungary: he became a "passive vampire" and soon died. Forty days after death his body was exhumed and found intact; then a stake was driven into his heart, his head cut off and his body burned (Calmet 1986: 174). The news of this case of presumed vampirism was widely reported and appeared even in the *London Journal* of March 1732. According to the local authorities Arnold Paul tried to set himself free from the vampire by eating a little of the earth from the former's tomb and sprinkling himself with his blood, but he did not succeed in avoiding the terrible fate of himself becoming a vampire (Polidori 1984: 12).

The Abbé also described the exhumation of another vampire in the territory of the former Hungary, a certain Peter Plogojovits (Calmet 1986: 223–224).

The practice of the "second burial" preceded by the exhumation of the corpse to ascertain or favour its decomposition explains, in the case of the ancient Hungarians and neighbouring peoples, the reason for which wooden coffins were chosen with window-like apertures to allow the circulation of the air, which they then left on the surface of the earth or barely buried.

Calmet also mentions Lappish vampires, noting that the Lapps used to inter corpses in the ground under the hearth so that they could putrefy more quickly (Calmet 1986: 188).

Among the Finno-Ugrians, however, belief in vampires developed above all with the Hungarians, especially the Hungarians of Transylvania: for example, one thinks of the Countess Erzsébet Báthory, related to the nobles of Transylvania, who died in 1614 after being walled in alive because she was suspected of being a vampire (McNally and Florescu 1973: 147–151).


Collana Culturale «LE QUINTESSENZE» N. 1
MARTIN DEL RIO
dottore della Compagnia di Gesù
LE DISQUISIZIONI MAGICHE
precedute da uno studio sul
SATANISMO AI GIORNI NOSTRI
di J. H. HUYSMANS
SOCIETA' EDITRICE PARTENOPEA — NAPOLI

Unfortunately the phenomenon of vampirism was in most cases approached incorrectly and the work of Calmet too aroused arguments which only concerned the superficial aspects of a belief which has its roots in a shamanic view of the world and of which it is an important part. Philosophers were certainly not the most suitable to evaluate vampirism and we can therefore understand that Voltaire himself scorned belief in vampirism (Köpeczi 1981: 91).

Nevertheless, to understand Calmet's interest in the living dead and in vampires it is sufficient to think of the cultural world in which he lived, when there was still the echo of the terrible trials for witchcraft based on evidence from works such as the *Malleus maleficarum* of the inquisitors Heinrich Institor (Krämer) and Jakob Sprenger, the first edition of which dates back to the winter of 1486–1487 in Strasbourg (34 editions followed the first up to 1669, ten of which at Lyon and two in Paris).

Treatises such as the *Démonomanie des sorcières* (1580) of Jean Bodin and the *De fascino* (1583) of the Benedictine prior Leonardus Vairus at Benevento (Italy) had been published in Paris. On the other hand studies on witchcraft and demonology in this period abounded in Europe and made a great noise; among these we can mention the *Daemonologie in Form of a Dialogue* (1597) of King James I of England, the *Disquisitiones magicae* (1599) of the Belgian Jesuit Martin del Rio, which contain a

complete picture of European witchcraft, and the popular *Compendium maleficarum* (1608) of the monk Franciscus Maria Guaccius.

However we must note that the position taken by official authority in relation to magic, whether secular or religious, was in most cases lacking in clarity and ranged from simple pity for whoever practised any form of magic, which was considered to be silly superstition, to total condemnation and burning at the stake. Thus we find belonging to the same category of people lunatics, people possessed by the devil, heretics, magicians, witches, alchemists, astrologers, necromancers and so on. Leonardo da Vinci himself, in his mocking verdict on necromancy and alchemy, stated that they were sisters (Vinci 1952: 156).

Even if belief in vampirism is one of shamanic type, in Western European magic fear of the diabolic living dead was very strong, as is borne out by Machiavelli himself when he writes about the monk Francesco da Montepulciano who went about shouting how the devil was making the dead rise again (Machiavelli 1961: 308–309).

Furthermore, the transformation of the dead into vampires has a parallel in the West in the transformation of the living into cats, wolves or other animals, that is in the phenomenon of zooanthropy which was derided, among others, by Leonardo da Vinci himself (Vinci 1952: 157).

The werewolves in popular North Germanic, Baltic and East European beliefs, were similar to vampires. Especially in Roumanian and Slav tradition (Jakobson and Szeftel 1966: 344, 346, 350) the vampire and the werewolf were closely associated, probably because both called to mind two taboos of the past, that is not to drink blood and not to eat human flesh. The terms in which they were described were the same. It is not a coincidence then that people thought that the werewolf became a vampire after death. Similarly it was believed that a kind of Hungarian vampire, the *fordolt farkas,* assumed the appearance of a lycanthrop. The Medieval doctor and philosopher Avicenna briefly mentions lycanthropy in Hungary (Corradi Musi 1995: 71). However the shamanic aspects of the same werewolves in Lithuania are undeniable (Ginzburg 1979: 51) just like the shamanic aspects of vampires (Cremene 1981: 13). Transformations of a shamanic kind into animals or into objects with souls to which the figure of the lycanthrop was associated and similar phenomena according to Roumanian beliefs, which must be correlated to ancient forms of initiation into warfare, were identical in the vampire (Cremene 1981: 13, 28).

It is also very interesting to recall that the witches of Galicia were vampires and were considered as great suckers of blood (Corradi Musi 1995: 66). However in trials in other European countries the figure of the witch who sucks the blood of newborn children is not unusual.

Clearly some elements of vampirism were known in the ancient magic of Western Europe too.

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Shamanic Practices of the Finno-Ugric Peoples in Giulio Ferrario's *Il Costume Antico e Moderno*

Giulio Ferrario's *Il costume antico e moderno* contains much information about shamanic practices among certain Finno-Ugric peoples at the beginning of the 19th century. It is particularly interesting in so far as it collects some aspects of shamanism which we could call "external", that have been sometimes neglected by specialists. The author's point of view is closely related to his tendency to be rationalistic which prevents him from understanding the deep social and cultural reasons for these practices, but which at the same time made him pay more attention to the objects and other formalities of the cult.

His monumental work, published simultaneously in French and Italian from 1816 to 1827 in Milan (subsequently completed with supplements) was re-edited in Florence from 1823 to 1838 and was reprinted many times, for example in Naples and Leghorn. Without doubt, it represented the most widespread ethnological "encyclopaedia" of the 19th century.

Ferrario did not dwell either on the ancient beliefs of the Hungarians, who had by now been converted to Christianity, or on those of the Finns, who had only in the past been "tenaci sostenitori del paganesimo" ("firm believers in paganism") (Ferrario 1835: 363), but on the forms of shamanism still flourishing among the Ob-Ugrians and partly among the Lapps. What impressed him in the latter was the wide use for divinatory purposes of the magic drum encircled with wood from which hung many copper rings – these produced a loud noise when shaken.

We understand at once that Ferrario was more interested in these sacred objects in their connection with shamanic rites and the other ornamental particulars of the ceremonies themselves than in the phenomenon of shamanism per se.

He made brief reference to the worship on the part of the Lapps of mountains and sacred rocks, and to the gods divided into four types (supercelestial, celestial, subcelestial and subterranean or infernal), but only to stress the sacrifices which were made to the various supernatural beings, conducted of course by the shamans. The priestly function of the shamans, according to the author, was related to the fact that they had the power to control evil spirits (Ferrario 1835: 398–399), as if they were familiar only with evil forces. Thus shamans were reduced to the status of workers of "black magic" in Ferrario's view. It is no coincidence that he states that shamans were feared by the Tungus for their power and hated because misfortunes were attributed to their spells (Ferrario 1831: 245–246). Thus he stressed only one aspect, and a secondary one at that, of the shamans' function. Their positive or negative use of magic always had a beneficial purpose. It lay in the harmonizing of the opposing forces of the universe so as to protect the individual or the community from evil and favour the good. The *noaide* ("shaman") of the Lapps also performed ambivalent acts corresponding to the ambivalent behaviour of supernatural spirits. He was in contact with heavenly deities, who were not always benevolent, as well as with subterranean deities, who were not always as Ferrario described them i.e. infernal, but simply spirits of the ancestors which were also dangerous because they expected reverence.

Frontespiece of the text: Salmon, Th. (1738), *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo*. T. VIII, Venezia: Albrizzi. Property of the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, catalogue number: S. IX 17954/8; photographed "by permisssion of the Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali" (Ministry of Culture and the Environment).

The negative image of Lappish shamans was not unknown even in the reports of Western European travellers. One need only think of Thomas Salmon who, about a century before Ferrario, stated that the Lapps tried in every way not to annoy the *noaide* (Salmon 1738, VIII: 183), because they were afraid he would seek vengeance.

In order to clarify Ferrario's statements, his inquiry into shamanism in general, which forms part of his description of the "religion" of the Tungus, becomes very important. The author in fact maintained that a precept of primary importance of shamanism was that of limiting by means of exorcism and sacrifices the harmful attacks of evil beings (Ferrario 1831: 245). The importance which the writer gave to the utilitarian aspects of shamanic practices is justifiable, but his interpretation of the rituals as being simply attempts at demon expulsion is doubtless limiting. Ferrario did not understand that these sacred practices were aimed at a greater knowledge of the laws of nature and of their existence and therefore were aimed at controlling them. For this reason they were directed to a skilled "medium" who, thanks to his knowledge obtained in trance, could intervene in man's favour. In the same way he did not trust the oracular abilities or the powers of "medicine-man" of the shaman and tried to denigrate the ecstasy of the shaman. He wrote that this was only a manifestation of an epileptic fit. Furthermore he added that woman by nature was more able in practising similar tricks (Ferrario 1831: 247). He made it clear, therefore, that ecstasy could be the result of the intake of alcoholic drinks or special infusions or even a perfect performance during which a kind of inspiration occasioned by evil spirits was simulated. Ferrario in his unsuccessful attempt to show that the shaman profited from the ignorance of others, concluded by involuntarily accentuating a very important aspect of shamanic séances, i.e. the scenography. His "shaman's theatre", in which reality and fiction are so inseparably blended, clearly reproduces the idea of the magic scenario in which such ceremonies were performed. Furthermore, these ceremonies were perfectly inserted into a cultural reality whose origins were common among the Finno-Ugrians, and entrusted to a fundamentally ritualistic performance the culminating moments of the communal celebrations of tribal character. An outstanding illustration could be the dramatic scenes in honour of the slaughtered bear or of a dead man during his commemoration, when they hoped for an imminent rebirth.

Ferrario also has the credit for connecting the shaman with the worship of idols. With regard to the Lapps, he recalled how, if their shamans were not involved in exorcisms, they manufactured little idols to sell to the people (Ferrario 1831: 247). It is necessary, however, to note that among the Finno-Ugrians it was not essential for the shaman to make these idols; their sacred power did not entirely depend on him. However, despite his mocking tone, Ferrario was one of the few individuals to record, albeit unconsciously, the ties existing between the "medium" and ancestor through an idol, the symbol of the totemic "double". He particularly emphasized the secret worship of idols by the Voguls which were invoked before hunting or fishing, and were offered sacrifices. In the shamanic field secrecy formed part of the sacred nature of the rituals. Apart from domestic idols, according to Ferrario the Voguls worshipped other kinds which they kept on the tops of pine trees, in mountain caves or on top of rocks. He referred especially to a probable idol in the form of a copper statue with the characteristics of a man armed with a javelin, placed on a very tall pine. He pointed out that the Voguls were notorious for making sacrifices to idols, called *šajtan* by the Russians of that land, in places called *šajtanka*. He reported for example the information about a cave at the foot of a mountain which was still considered in his own times as a sanctuary, full of the bones of victims and copper rings and incisions which were worshipped (Ferrario 1831: 253–254). Ferrario was not surprised, as was Salmon, by

"The way of life of the Swedish Lapps". Publ. Salmon, Th. (1738), *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo*. T. VIII. Venezia: Albrizzi (p. 179).

the fact that the Voguls did not have a priest for their sacrifices (Salmon 1738, V: 532); on the contrary, he paid considerable attention to the priest-shamans of the Ostyaks. Ferrario even reported the notoriety enjoyed among the Voguls of a rather crudely fashioned stone figure representing a young elk which stood inside a special yurta near the dwelling of a certain Denichkin on the banks of the river Sosva. The Ostyaks, according to Ferrario, had two groups of separate idols, one for worship by women, the other by men. They were rudimentary wooden statuettes, roughly covered with rags, situated in a corner of the yurta; in front of them were a few boxes containing offerings. The Ostyaks used to pay respect to idols by smearing their mouths with fish fat. They had respect for them but in the event of the failure of a remedy by the idols on whatever pretext they threw them on the ground and trampled on them (Ferrario 1831: 256–257), forgetting their original totemic value. It is clear that the works of Thomas Salmon formed a part of Ferrario's sources with respect to this argument. Salmon had dealt with the vendettas of the Ostyaks against these domestic "lares" at length, basing himself on the reports of travellers (Salmon 1738, V: 546).

We learn from Salmon that it was the heads of families who took the place of priests in prayers to the idols of the house. This depended on the fact that the most elderly people, endowed with experience and therefore more wisdom, were the ones who could substitute the official worker of sacred acts in everyday ritual practices.

That such worship was included in the field of shamanic practices is quite clear from Ferrario's affirmations. He observed in fact that it was the shamans who blessed the idols and decided where they should place those which were revered by whole communities; these places automatically became temples. Ferrario paid great attention to the so-called "Sanctuary of Vorksarskoi" situated

in un vallone coperto di boscaglia, e custodito diligentemente dagli Ostiachi, i quali cercano di nasconderne ai Russi tutti i sentieri

(in a big valley covered with woods, guarded assiduously by the Ostyaks who tried to hide all the pathways from the Russians) (Ferrario 1831: 257).

Large numbers of people went there in procession to make their offerings, all separated according to their tribe. The idol consisted of two elements, i.e. one in the form of a man, the other a woman, both richly dressed, according to Ostyak tradition, in precious materials, expensive furs and ornaments in animal form stamped on plates of brass or tin. Each statue was situated in a special "chapel" constructed near a tree with its trunk covered in materials and heavy cloth; the top of the tree was decorated with sheets of tin and bells which rang at every breath of wind. The tree near the hut containing the male idol was provided with bows and quivers. The trees growing in the vicinity of the two idols were covered with reindeer skins and the furs of sacrificed animals. The two statues were surrounded by domestic implements such as spoons, cauldrons, tobacco jars and other similar offerings. Men and women worshipped their respective idols apart. Furthermore the women had to be led into the hut by a female shaman (Ferrario 1831: 257–258). The distinction made between men and women need not surprise us; we know, in fact, that woman appeared as a tabooed being in many ceremonies of shamanic nature because she had the mystic capacity of giving birth. For this reason her idol, which represented the female ancestor par excellence, could not be confused with the idol of the men.

The great esteem in which the trees of the sacred wood surrounding the two forementioned statues were held forms part of the shamanic concept of the sacred tree. What Ferrario related with regard to this is of some interest. In fact he wrote that in the past the Ostyaks revered many more trees in the wood surrounding the sanctuary and that they attached the skins of sacrificed animals to their branches (Ferrario 1831: 258). But since the Cossacks used to go robbing skins, the Ostyaks cut down the trees and transferred the trunks to safer places. These were even in Ferrario's time still the object of worship and offerings. The behaviour of the Ostyaks bears witness once more to how they considered certain trees inviolable. Rather than leave them fall into the hands of the desecrating Cossacks, they preferred them to be cut down and kept safe; the violation of taboos by the Cossacks could in fact bring divine punishment on the Ostyaks. The flourishing nature which surrounded over a wide area the sanctuary where victims were sacrificed was symbolically related to the shamanic concept of rebirth with greater vigour after death.

Ferrario persisted in his negative approach concerning the Ostyak shamans noting that they made people believe in their ability to solve every kind of misfortune in order to live at the expense of others. However he showed great respect for the priestly role of the shaman on the occasion of sacrifices. In fact he stated:

Uno de' principali offizii di questi Sciamani si è di ordinare quanto è necessario pei sacrifici e di eseguire la cerimonia nella seguente maniera. Si legano le quattro gambe della renna, che è l'animale che si sacrifica, e lo sciamano si mette dinanzi all'idolo ed espone gridando ciò che chiede la persona venuta a fare il sacrifizio: tutti gli astanti ripetono le sue parole. Durante questa cerimonia un Ostiaco si pone al fianco della renna in qualche distanza coll'arco teso e scocca la freccia nel momento che lo Sciamano dà il segno toccando con una bacchetta la testa della vittima: un altro Ostiaco finisce di ammazzare l'animale con un palo ben aguzzo, e dopo si prende la renna per la coda, si trascina per tre volte intorno all'idolo, e si sventra. Col sangue del cuore di questo animale si frega la bocca dell'idolo; la pelle e la testa vengono appese a un albero vicino; in seguito si fa cuocere la carne, e si mangia in mezzo a gridi di allegrezza. Prima e dopo il sacrifizio si usano cantici, ed ogni Ostiaco è padrone di cantare quello che vuole. Finita

la cerimonia tutti alzano le braccia al cielo per ringraziare l'idolo, e poi raccolgono quanto è sopravanzato del pasto per darlo alle mogli e ai figliuoli, e portano a casa anche qualche poco di grasso della vittima per presentarlo all'idolo domestico. Alcune volte si fanno de' grandissimi sacrifizii pubblici, ed in tale occasione gli Ostiachi ricchi conducono a torme al santuario le loro migliori renne, e per furor di voto, da cui sono invasi, ne offrono tante che appena ne restano loro le necessarie a tirare la slitta che deve ricondurli a casa

(One of the main functions of these shamans is to prepare all that is needed for sacrifices and to perform the ceremony in the following manner. The legs of a reindeer are tied – this is the animal which is to be sacrificed – and the shaman places himself opposite the idol and with loud shouting exclaims what the person who has come to make the sacrifice wants: all the bystanders repeat his words. During the ceremony an Ostyak stands beside the reindeer, just a little distance away, with his bow stretched shoots the arrow at the moment when the shaman gives a sign by touching the victim's head with a wand: an other Ostyak finishes killing the animal with a very sharp pole, and then the reindeer is taken by the tail, dragged three times round the idol, and disembowelled. With the blood from the heart of the animal the idol's mouth is rubbed; the skin and the head are hung on a nearby tree; then the cooked meat is eaten with cries of revelry. Before and after the sacrifice songs are sung, and every Ostyak is entitled to sing whatever he likes. When the ceremony is over everybody lifts his arms to the sky to thank the idol, and then they gather whatever is left over from the meal to give to their wives and little children, also carrying home a little of the victim's fat as an offering to the domestic idol. Sometimes very grand sacrifices are made, and on such occasions the rich Ostyaks bring large numbers of reindeer to the sanctuary and, carried away by religious fervour, they offer so many that they hardly have enough left to pull the sleighs to take them back home) (Ferrario 1831: 259–260).

Ferrario's words are in part extremely relevant. Above all we can deduce from them that the respect for the domestic idols reflected in reduced proportions that which they felt for the more important ones which were honoured by one or more tribes under the guidance of the shaman. The offerings at the sacred tree, particularly those of a sacrificed animal, bear witness to a typically shamanic concept of sacred flora. It was no coincidence that the head was chosen as an offering because it was often considered to be the seat of the immortal "second soul". While Salmon had defined as idolatry the rituals and sacrifices of the Voguls in honour of the sacred birch (Salmon 1738, V: 531–532), Ferrario understood that the worship of trees also formed part of a special animistic vision of the world. Salmon too, with reference to the worship of idols among the Ostyaks, realized that it was of the animistic kind. He revealed that the spirit of the idol always took part in the feasts held in his honour, and then returned to his proper dwelling place (Salmon 1738, V: 547). The idol's mouth, fouled with the blood of the reindeer's heart, as Ferrario reported, must be related to the need for blood by the ancestor; a similar need is seen on the part of so many deities in the shamanic field in that they expected blood sacrifices or were actually anthropophagous. Furthermore blood, by nature of its colour too, the symbol of vital forces and the immortal soul, assumed an auspicious quality of regeneration. The wand used by the shaman and the pole to kill the reindeer are connected with the "tree of life" which was the emblem of death-rebirth.

Ferrario gave to the description of the sacrifice features of a large theatrical performance directed by a dignified shaman-priest, while all the spectators on this occasion were in a state of ecstasy.

The theatrical and choral aspect of shamanic ceremonies is abundantly clear in the description offered by our author of the Ostyak shamans in their séances, the purpose of which was oracular. He wrote:

Costoro come gli altri Sciamani della Siberia, fanno uso del cembalo carico di sonagli e di ciondoli; e quando vogliono esercitare la loro arte divinatoria, si mettono dinanzi a un gran

> fuoco, ed ivi fanno le solite contorsioni e boccacce spaventose fino a tanto che abbiano avuta risposta dallo spirito che invocano, o secondo i loro scongiuri l'abbiano cacciato via. Tutti quelli che sono presenti fanno un rumore terribile battendo sopra caldaje ed altri corpi sonori, e gettando urli altissimi fin tanto che la loro immaginazione riscaldata abbia loro fatto vedere un fumo turchino uscir dalla testa dello Sciamano, il quale facendo mostra di non aver più fiato si lascia al solito cadere a terra, ove resta giacente per qualche tempo
>
> (People like the other shamans of Siberia use a cymbal full of bells and pendants; when they wish to put into practice their oracular skills, they stand in front of a big fire, and perform the customary contorsions and frightening faces until they have received an answer from the spirit they have invoked, or driven away with their exorcisms. All those who are present create a terrible noise knocking on cauldrons and other noise-making instruments, uttering piercing cries until their overheated imagination makes them see dark blue smoke issuing from the head of the shaman, who pretends to be out of breath and usually falls to the ground, where he remains prostrate for some time) (Ferrario 1831: 258–259).

Despite his contempt for magic in general, Ferrario reproduced in a convincing if synthetic manner the idea of a real shamanic séance in which the actors know how to perform their role perfectly and with great effect, using musical sounds, noises and cries in the light of a fire which seems to infect the "medium" who is internally overheated in his ecstatic passion, just as in a ceremony of initiation.

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Aspects of Asian-Uralic Shamanism in the Writings of 19th Century Travellers

Among the accounts of journeys made in the 19th century those of Eva Félinska, descended from an old Ukrainian noble family, and that of Matthias Alexander Castrén, both published by De Lanoye, seem particularly significant. Above all Félinska relates that the Ostyaks of Berezovo wrapped their ritual invocations around a sacred larch (De Lanoye 1868: 36); then she described the carrying out of "religious duties" of two Ostyaks in the following manner:

> ils se placent devant un arbre, un mélèze plus particulièrement, et dans le lieu le plus écarté et le plus touffu de la forêt; là, se croyant en sécurité et loin de tous les regards, ils se livrent à des contorsions d'épileptique; ils remuent les jambes et les bras, ils se démènent comme des possédés
>
> (they stand in front of a tree, more particularly a larch, in the remotest and thickest part of the forest: there, believing themselves to be safe and far away from all onlookers, they give themselves up to epileptic fits; they agitate their legs and arms, and they shake like possessed people) (1868: 45–46).

Obviously she was describing a shamanic trance. The traveller was afraid of being killed for what she had seen. In fact in the shamanic field secrecy was part of the sacred nature of the rites. Félinska was struck by the fact that almost every Ostyak wore on his chest an image of a divinity called *šajtan*, carved or engraved in wood, and also by the fact that in every house there was a domestic *šajtan* of greater dimension in the place of honour; at each meal time the best mouthful was offered to the latter, which was dressed in seven shirts with a border of pearls and around the neck a necklace of various coins. The traveller gave prominence to the great influence exercised on the Ostyaks by the shamans who, in her opinion, corrupted men by their ambition and egoism (1868: 54).

Castrén met also the Ostyaks of Irtyš who preserved bear worship, as is testified by a forceful idol depicting the bear and the feasts in honour of the slaughtered animal (1868: 89). Concerning the Ob-Ugrians he mentioned only the worship of the god of Ob who was considered by them to be a great benefactor (1868: 91).

Castrén visited the Samoyeds of Tomsk, who belonged to the Selkup group, and related that the spirits called *lohet*[1] which were subject to their chief god Num, who is to be identified with the God of the Sky of the Finno-Ugrians, were invisible to ordinary mortals and only the shamans could get in contact with them. According to Castrén, only idols made by the shaman were worshipped by the Samoyeds of Tomsk, whereas in the case of the Northern Samoyeds the sacred character of the idol did not depend absolutely on the shaman, as is the case with the Finno-Ugrians. However, everyone among the Samoyeds of Tomsk owned his own protector idol supplied by the shaman. An animal skin was given to the shaman; he went away and on returning had conferred on the skin a human form and had clothed it with the traditional costume of the country made by a young virgin. The *los* was placed in a basket, which was also woven by a virgin, and situated in a place apart, where it received offerings. When it was neces-

[1] Plural of *los*.

sary to ask for special help from the *lohet*, the shaman had to interfere, in so far as those spirits were dumb.

The traveller described the following shamanic séance: the shaman, sitting on a stool, his eyes turned towards the entrance, assumed the appearance of a man who neither saw nor understood anything; in his right hand he held a rod decorated on one side only with symbolic signs, and in his left hand he had two arrows to the points of which a bell was attached.

The shaman sang an invocatory song while with the magic rod he struck the two arrows whose bells gave out a rhythmic sound. On the appearance of the spirits he began to dance with movements which were more difficult than harmonious, and he continued to sing and make the bells ring. When during the dance he raised himself up high those who were present repeated his words, but when he lowered himself they became silent. Then the shaman expressed the suggestions of the spirits (1868: 93–96). Castrén noted how it was essential for the shaman to keep away from metal objects that could injure him (1868: 95); we are bound to recall, with respect to this, that iron is generally forbidden during these rites in so far as the spirits are opposed to it. For this reason arose the superstition that iron keeps far away evil supernatural forces. We must relate the taboos concerning iron however, with those of the magic craft of the blacksmith which is superior to that of the gods in the working of metal. Such a craft must have been well known among the Samoyeds of Tomsk, since the men of this tribe were accomplished blacksmiths and carpenters (1868: 98).

The shaman also needed the magic rods in divination; in fact, as our traveller noted, when he cast it down at the feet of his clients, if it fell with the symbolic designs facing upwards it foretold misfortune, but good news if the contrary occurred.

Castrén furthermore stated that in the governorships of Tobolsk, Arhangelsk and Tomsk the shaman had power without limits (1868: 96–97). He described one of the shamanic rites, which greatly aroused the admiration of the Russians and the Samoyeds of Tomsk as follows:

> Le chaman s'assied au milieu d'une peau de renne séchée, étendue à l'envers sur le plancher; puis, les assistants lui lient les pieds et les mains. Quand on a fermé les fenêtres, le chaman commence à invoquer les esprits sur lesquels il a du pouvoir. Soudain des clameurs étranges se font entendre au milieu de l'obscurité. Des voix partent de différents points de la yourte, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur, et de la peau de renne s'élève un son cadencé de tambour. On entend tout autour de la chambre le grognement de l'ours, le sifflement du serpent, le cri de l'écureuil. Enfin le vacarme cesse, et les auditeurs attendent avec impatience le dénoûment. Quelques minutes se passent dans cette attente, puis on voit venir le chaman dégagé de ses liens. Personne ne mettrait en doute que ce ne soient les Lohet qui ont battu du tambour, grogné et sifflé dans la yourte, délivré et emporté le chaman par une voie invisible
>
> (The shaman sits in the middle of a dried reindeer skin, which has been turned upside down on the floor; then, those present tie his feet and hands. When the windows have been closed, the shaman begins to invoke the spirits over which he has power. Unexpectedly strange cries are heard in the midst of the darkness. Voices come from different points of the yurta, both inside and outside, and from the reindeer skin the rhythmic sound of a drum is emitted. The growling of a bear is heard all around the room, the hissing of a snake, and the cry of a squirrel. At last the din subsides, and the listeners wait with impatience for the conclusion. One or two minutes pass while they wait, then the shaman is seen to be freed from his bonds. Nobody would doubt that it wasn't the *lohet* which beat the drum, or growled or hissed in the yurta, when the shaman was freed and carried away along an invisible road) (1868: 97).

Further information about Asian-Uralic shamanism is supplied by Stéphen Sommier who in 1885 published in Florence the account of his summer trip in Siberia: he was

Ostyak women. Publ. Sommier, S. (1885), *Un' estate in Siberia fra Ostiacchi, Samoiedi, Siriéni, Tatári, Kirghísi e Baskíri*. Firenze: Loescher (p. 425).

familiar with the reports of previous travellers in those countries with the exception of that of Félinska. He too remarked on the devotion of the Ostyaks to the primitive images of their gods which he was able to see in the traces of a hearth and near the oldest cedar tree in a sacred wood: little pieces of cloth, red ribbons, copper rings and the remains of a magic drum etc. had been offered to it (Sommier 1885: 246–247). Sommier noted that the Ostyaks placed their sacred sites and burial grounds in areas which had something special about them, such as rich vegetation; à propos he considered that they had "il senso della poesia della natura" ("the sense of the poetry of nature") (1885: 248). One must add to this that exuberant nature was symbolically associated with the shamanic concept of death – a concept which the same traveller discovered (1885: 245), interpreted as a rebirth with new strength. He described in great detail a sacred wood and the offerings hung on the trees, amongst which was a magic drum and two swords wrapped in a scabbard of gilded material (1885: 318), which were clearly donated by a shaman. He also found at the edge of the wood a hundred or so idols and some sacred stones (1885: 319).

Among the evidence of animism of the Ostyaks which forms the basis of the shamanism, Sommier recalled a ritual dance between a woodcutter and a tree which suddenly was metamorphosed into a man (1885: 218); he pointed out also the Ostyak dances in honour of the slaughtered bear, in which its rebirth was represented, and also the various taboos connected with this sacred animal, which are similar to the taboos noted among the Northern peoples (1885: 166–167, 217).

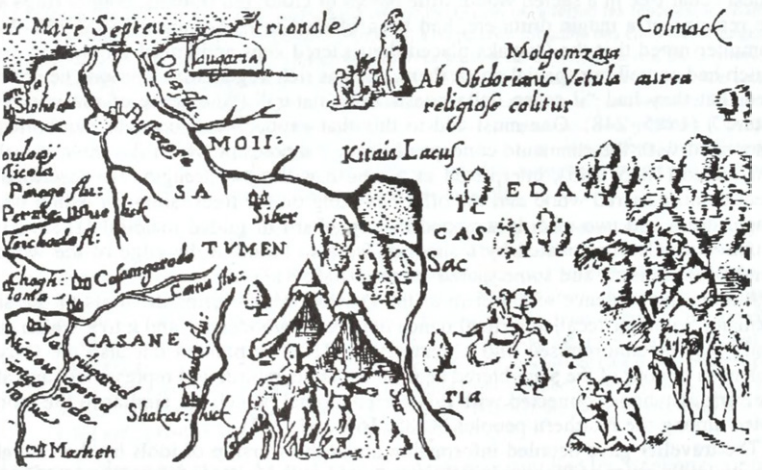
The traveller gave detailed information about the worship of idols by the Ostyaks. Above all he stressed the sacred value attributed to the *bol'šoj šajtan*, the idols of the greater divinities, which were placed in the remoter parts of woods and protected against

the curiosity of the profane by bows, whose arrows were shot to strike anyone who came near; these bows were similar to the ones used in hunting the bear and the moose (1885: 249).

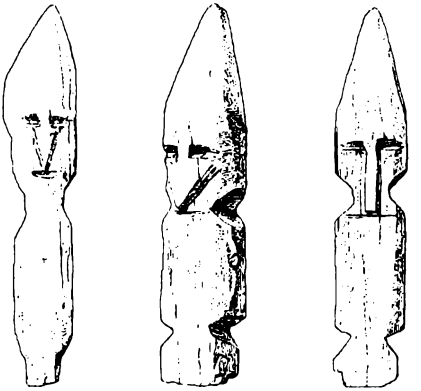
Sommier did not find any traces of the Lady of Gold or the Sun Lady, or Mother Sun, who represented the "astro benefico" ("kind star") which was worshipped by the Voguls and the Zyryans. He came to the conclusion that in all probability it was not a question of an original cult object, but a statue or image of the Virgin with the child which had been spread beyond the Urals by the Zyryans and the Russians (1885: 24, 249–250 n. 2). In our opinion, however, it was one of the more archaic idols to be associated with the solar myths, to which the same figure of the shaman as "lord of the fire" or blacksmith, the heir of the "Divine Blacksmith", was related. The "Vetula aurea" ("Golden calf") of the Ob-Ugrians, already surprisingly well known for example to Anton Wied who on his 1555 map called it in Russian style "Zolotája baba", and also to Giovanni Botero, who depicted it at the mouth of the Ob in his atlas published at Brescia in 1598, formed part of a myth which was well known in ancient epic cosmogony.

Sommier had the good luck to be present at a divination rite carried out by a shaman, and he described it as follows: "Sedutosi sulle gambe incrociate, e borbottando alcune parole magiche" ("Sitting cross-legged, and mumbling some magic words") the shaman

> osservò per un po' di tempo le oscillazioni di un'ascia che teneva in una mano, sospesa a un nastro ornato di anelli d'ottone. Da queste oscillazioni trasse il suo vaticinio
>
> (observed for a while the vibrations of an axe which he held in one hand, which was suspended from a ribbon decorated with brass rings. From these vibrations he deduced his prophecy) (1885: 265).



"Vetula aurea" in the atlas of Giovanni Botero (1598, Vol. I, p. 219).



Idols of Ostyak divinities (discovered in the sacred wood near Mují). Publ. Sommier, S. (1885), *Un'estate in Siberia fra Ostiacchi, Samoiedi, Siriéni, Tatári, Kirghísi e Baskíri*. Firenze: Loescher (p. 246).

Later on the traveller drew attention to the fact that the axe, like the sword and drums, were the "strumenti sacri adoprati dagli sciamani nelle loro invocazioni" ("sacred instruments used by shamans in their invocations") (1885: 356). To these can be added sticks of special form, like the ones Sommier found in the tomb of an Ostyak shaman (1885: 245). While the latter are perhaps to be related to the "shamanic tree" and the archetypal "tree of life" which united heaven, earth and the underworld, the sword takes us back again to the ritual scene of ancient solar mythology: just like the sword of the ancient Lettish *dainas*, it probably represented the rays of the sun, in line with the symbolism to be found amongst other things in certain Finno-Ugric and Germanic cosmogonic myths. Sommier was able to verify how the shamans defended the secrets of their magic in the face of a stubborn refusal on the part of an Ostyak shaman to reveal his idol, called *šajtan*, which was well hidden in his tent. The shaman, fearing that the traveller and his companions were Russian officials intent upon confiscating the objects of his cult, with a very neat logic observed that

> come il *pope* di Obdórsk era incaricato di custodire i suoi santi, così lui doveva proteggere il suo Dio contro qualunque profanazione
>
> (just as the *pope* of Obdórsk was duty bound to protect his saints, so he had to protect his god against any profanation) (1885: 342).

In a temporarily abandoned Ostyak dwelling Sommier managed to see a domestic idol, it too called *šajtan*, placed at the back, consisting of a large bundle of clothes, with a metal disc acting as a head (1885: 352). The traveller knew that these bundles contained offerings of money, precious objects and fine skins: from the dimensions of their belly, it was clear that these idols were greatly or little worshipped and if the family which they protected was rich or poor. He was able to note from close up another even more primitive domestic idol, which instead of a metal disc showed a ball of cloth (1885: 408–411). The traveller described the Ostyak rag doll, which managed to "live" in the dwelling in great respect, before being buried in the tomb of

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1. The sacred wood near Mují.
2. Ostyak rag doll (found in the sacred wood near Mují).
3–4. Ostyak rag dolls made by an Obdórsk woman.
Publ. Sommier, S. (1885), *Un'estate in Siberia fra Ostiacchi, Samoiedi, Siriéni, Tatári, Kirghísi e Baskíri*. Firenze: Loescher (pp. 247, 248, 253).

the dead man whom it represented (1885: 352–353). Clearly it symbolized the "second soul" of the deceased who in some ways remained attached to his earthly surroundings for a while, before going away for good and wait for reincarnation.

To testify to the failure of the fact of Christianization carried out by the missionaries among the Ostyaks and other tribes of the lower Ob, Sommier stressed that the shamans themselves accepted baptism, but continued their traditional ritual practices, and that some people promised to let themselves be baptised only if in return they were guaranteed the realization of requests which were not granted, despite the intervention of the shaman (1885: 380). On the Jamal peninsular, Sommier observed that the Nenets worshipped domestic idols and stones, and were basically animists (1885: 383, 408–411, 413). He was able to be present at a burial ground at the exhumation of some corpses (1885: 413–414). Sommier met a female shaman, but since she did not have her drum she could not give him any demonstration of her magic skills (1885: 369–370). However, he took part in the following shamanic rite which seemed to him a feeble imitation of the ancient rites. In the centre of a smoky tent, the shaman warmed his simple drum over the fire. The drum was composed of a circle of wood under which two sticks had been crossed to provide easy handling. It was covered on one side by a dressed reindeer skin. After the skin of the drum had expanded from the heat, the shaman, who was not wearing any special costume, sat cross-legged at the back of the dwelling and began to strike his instrument with a wooden stick, the end of which was covered with reindeer skin, and he chanted a song, which was joined by some of those present.

Then the shaman raised his voice and increased the volume of the drum beats. In the meantime the tent had been filled with women also, who were all huddled together near the entrance in the less dignified part of the tent. Two distinct louder drum beats marked the moment when the shaman began to feel direct contact with the supernatural spirits. He closed his eyes, but since the oracle could not be heard, he had to repeat the invocation (1885: 385–387). Sommier noted that in the Samoyed area also the main task of the shaman was to cure illnesses (1885: 385 n. 1).

In fact, the accounts of the journeys mentioned, which devote considerable space to the rites and magic of shamanism, make up a source of information of undoubted value because it has been provided by direct observation of people who, although not completely prepared to express judgement, however were greatly interested in the culture of such far off peoples.

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The Shamanism of the North American Indians

Some Connections between Finno-Ugric and North American Indian Shamanism

The shamanism of the North American Indians appears, and not only at first sight, close to the shamanism of the Finno-Ugric peoples. There are already those who claim, with a certain degree of sureness, at least from the archaeological and palaeo-anthropological point of view, that the Siberian origin of the North American Indians is highly probable: they might have reached Alaska and present positions further south by successive and slow migrations across the Bering Straits (Driver 1975: 3–8). Mircea Eliade does not accept the view that North American shamanism is an Asian import, but he does not deny an Asiatic influence (Eliade 1985: 362). The problem is complex but deserves attention. According to Mircea Eliade, the fact that in South America shamanism shows similarities to that of North America is in itself sufficient to demonstrate that shamanism was carried to the two Americas by the first immigrants (Eliade 1985: 359). Apart from the fact that the statement is arguable and too hasty, it could be that at least in North America certain early immigrants came originally from Asia. To corroborate this possibility, we may cite the thesis of Otto J. von Sadovszky, according to which the Wintuan language of the Indians of California is typologically similar to the languages of the Ob-Ugrians (von Sadovszky 1981: 237–243).

In Finno-Ugric myth the same divinities are often antagonistic because they protect two diverse activities: there is the case of the Lapps who make a clear distinction between the gods of the home and those outside the home, regarding them as often being in rivalry, reflecting the ancient one existing between the hunter and woman. Beyond possible vestiges of patriarchy and matriarchy, this marks the knowledge of two diverse but at the same time necessary existences. The precautions taken by the Finno-Ugric peoples towards women are well known: they are excluded by a series of taboos from certain rites and sacrifices. The North American Indians and in particular the Carrier of British Columbia nurse a most remarkable fear with regard to the puberty of girls who are in fact kept isolated in a hut for three or four years (Benedict 1974: 34). As far as the shaman is concerned, Joan Halifax following the idea of the psychiatrist John Weir Perry notes that

> La battaglia dello sciamano con gli elementi può manifestarsi anche con la paura del potere dell'opposto, ad esempio, la resistenza atterrita dello sciamano siberiano all'androginia [...] il matrimonio sacro degli sciamani dell'Artide con uno spirito selvaggio, di solito femminile, congiunge le coppie di opposti
>
> (The battle between the shaman and the elements can be demonstrated in the fear of the power of the opponent, for example, the frightening resistance of the Siberian shaman towards androgyny [...] the sacred marriage of shamans of the Arctic with a wild spirit, usually female, joins pairs of opposites) (Halifax 1982: 230).

The drum of the Finno-Ugric shaman is made of a special wood, beech or something similar, which endows it with a sacred power. Similarly among the Indians of North America the implements which help the shaman in healing are carved out by him from a particular tree on which the shaman has celebrated the appropriate initiatory rite: this occurs, for example, among the Salish, Kwakiutl, Nootka, Tsimshian and Haida tribes (Jilek 1982: 139–141). Obviously this tree symbolizes the "tree of the world". The Skidi Pawnee too, amongst others, correlate the sun and moon with the tree. For example, when they erect a new hearth, they plant a tree on the tail of a dummy placed nearby representing a water monster; similarly other Pawnee tribes erected a clay statue of a woman on the south side of the fire: the fire was a symbol of the sun, the woman of the moon (Lowie 1982: 182–183). The tree, which is of fundamental importance in various Sioux rituals, was connected with the sun especially in the dance of the Wakan-Tanka (Sun). On this occasion the Sioux encircled a sacred tree, which they had felled, near which were placed, like the spokes of a wheel, twenty eight poles: amongst other things, these symbolized the phases of the lunar month; at the end, the dancers gave the tree, which was a symbol of the sun, a piece of their own flesh (Corradi Musi 1988: 41). The Kwakiutl burned the figure of the "cannibal", made of the bark of a cedar, in a fire during their initiatory rites (Benedict 1974: 184).

The "cosmic tree" with seven or nine branches is sometimes substituted among the North American Indians by a sacred column, or pole, visualized at the centre of the universe, just as occurs in Western Europe and among the Finno-Ugrians. The pole which crossed the three levels of the cosmos was reproduced in the house of the cult where the initiation of shaman candidates took place. Probably the ecstasy of the Kwakiutl shaman who leaped onto a sacred pole is to be related to the similar ecstasy of the Vasyugan Ostyak shaman. The inviolable nature of sacred woods, present among the Finno-Ugric and European peoples of Aryan origin, due to the fear of a vendetta by the spirit of vegetation, is met however even in North America among the Hidatsa Indians.

Furthermore, in the Finno-Ugric area there is the shaman who has taught hunters the rites for the conservation of slaughtered animals, considered as totems. These totems are often reproduced in the dress of the shaman. The Finno-Ugrians, in particular, attach great importance to the Feast of the Bear, an animal considered to be their ancestor. The Ainus and Yuraks also behave in the same way. Among the Kwakiutl there are the so-called Bear dancers, dressed in bear skins. The link between bear and man is evident in the legend of the Cherokee, in which we are told that an entire clan was changed into bears, through a process of severe fasting (Mooney 1970: 325–326). The close connection between the bear and the shaman can be seen above all in the Pawnee songs dedicated to the bear, which for the uninitiated do not yield their meaning and can only be interpreted by one who belongs to the Society of the Bear. These songs remind one of the Vogul songs of the bear, which, amongst other things, reveal a more remote Asiatic character. With regard to this, Natalie Curtis makes this interesting observation:

> The Pawnees say that the Bear – the divine, generic Bear – is hard to kill, and this not only because of his thick hide but because of the psychic quality of ever-renewing life within him. The man who has learned of the bear, or upon whom the Bear has bestowed power, has attained something of the nature of the Bear; he has become like the Bear, hard to kill because of the miraculous life force within him. The Bear has his power from the Sun, and the Bear himself is oftentimes the symbol of the Sun [...]. This knowledge of the power of the Bear is the secret of the Bear Society, a secret never lightly told (Curtis 1968: 96).

The Eskimoes too hold the bear in great respect, as is evidenced, for example, in the rites of the hunt of the white bear, *nanuk*, on the part of the Inuit hunters (Zavatti 1982: 9). Silvio Zavatti notes:

> E' indubitabile, ormai, che gli Eschimesi sono di stirpe asiatica e che la loro 'cultura' è vicina alle culture paleoasiatiche e a quella formatasi nella fase magdaleniana del paleolitico europeo
>
> (It is beyond doubt that the Eskimoes are of Asiatic origin and that their 'culture' is close to palaeoasiatic cultures and to that culture produced in the magdalenian phase of the European palaeolithic) (Zavatti 1973: 16).

The universal myth of the miraculous heavenly doe appears in the case of the Finno-Ugrians to be connected with the system of brotherhoods. Marcell Jankovics recalls that the Seneca of North America in antiquity were divided into brotherhoods of bears and stags (Jankovics 1982: 335): it is possible that this is something more than a simple coincidence. Jankovics later interprets the Hind which precedes Orion as Cassiopea – Perseus – Auriga and notes that the Ket people calls Orion "Head of the Stag" (Jankovics 1982: 337): it seems, therefore, that there is a connection between the imagination of the Siberian peoples and that of the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians. We can recall that the stag with the black tail was one of the allied gods of the Sioux Lakota "visionaries" (Vazeilles 1982: 115).

As far as the Finno-Ugrians, the Ainus and the Yuraks are concerned, some consider them as belonging in antiquity to the same cultural cycle, during which it was the custom to kill the old totem animal in order to effect its rebirth in a younger animal (Bosi 1961: 143). This appears in the shamanic concept of life which they considered as a rebirth. Later, when they began to kill the bear out of a necessity for food, they continued to practise rites of propitiation as well as of purification with respect to it. The hunt and the eating of the meat of the animals are accompanied, in other cases too, by precise rules to the end that the dead animals should not take vengeance on the hunters. Similar taboos are present also among the North American Indians. Certain so-called Lower Algonquin communities do not allow dogs to eat the blood and bones of a bear, and young girls and wives without children can not take part in the Feast of the Bear (Perrot 1968: 200). Other Algonquin tribes of East Subarctic Canada near Lake Winnipeg keep the head of the bear, paint it with various colours, and during the feast in its honour decorate it and dedicate songs to it. Among Finnish and especially Carelian hunters entirely similar practices are to be found (Perrot 1968: 201–202). The Estonians, like certain North American Indian tribes, do not consume the blood of slaughtered animals, convinced that it contains the soul of the animal, and that it can enter the body of the person who drinks the blood (Frazer 1963: 228). The Eskimoes believe in the soul (*tarnek* or *tarneq*) of animals and are convinced, for example, that the spirit of a dead seal is transferred to the point of the harpoon, which is put by the hunter close to a lamp, so that it may not suffer from the cold (Zavatti 1977: 66). The North American Indians, like the Finno-Ugrians, also keep various taboos in connection with fish.

The totem animals of the North American Indians are similar to those of the Finno-Ugrians and the Siberian peoples. Furthermore, with reference to the Indians one can say what Géza Róheim states about the Voguls and the Ostyaks, namely that the totemic birds of the clans of the Ob-Ugrians are the same as the birds which help shamans, for whom totemism and shamanism are very closely connected (Róheim 1966). The costume of the Finno-Ugric shamans, which depicts the bear, or as Mihály Hoppál notes, birds or stags, serves expressly to show that the shaman identifies himself during his ecstasy with the totem, the protecting ancestor (Hoppál 1980: 264). According

to a myth of the Palaeo-Siberian Ket, the shaman is the son of the eagle. One of the beliefs present among the Yakuts is that the eagle appears at the birth, the initiatory dismemberment and the death of the shaman. Furthermore, among the Buryats the shaman is represented by an eagle; among the Yenisei Ostyaks an eagle with two heads was the first shaman; the Teleuts call the eagle "bird-shaman" in so far as it is the helping spirit of the shaman. The Finns regard the mythical shaman Väinämöinen as the son of the eagle (Halifax 1982: 245). In the Americas too the eagle has a sacred power. Among the tribes of the Indian Sioux Lakota the spotted eagle is the supernatural messenger of the shaman candidate, destined to become after forms of self torture *wic^{h}asa-wak^{h}an* ("holy man"), i.e. a healer, who can communicate with the world of the dead and the spirits, like the Finno-Ugric healer (Vazeilles 1982: 116, 119). The totem of the eagle is not only quite widespread among the Indians of North America, but also the costumes of the shamans are inspired by the eagle. Among the Sioux tribes the shamanic costume makes use of the hide of the buffalo, employing the same technique with which the Siberian shamanic costume uses the skin of the bear. Moreover, we know the importance of the eagle among the Pawnee. For example, Letakots-Lesa, the "eagle-chief" of one of the four divisions of the Pawnee, is represented as a member of the Society of the Bear, while he wears a collar of bear claws and a "busby" crowned by two eagle feathers, one representing the male, the other the female principle, both a symbol of life: just as the bear, so the eagle is a totemic symbol for the Pawnee (Curtis 1968: 96–97). We learn from a song of the Mountain Navajo Indians that the sacred youth, destined along with the sacred young woman to give their lives to the Navajo tribe, is dressed in clothing characterized by eagle feathers forming a fringe on the sleeves (Curtis 1968: 368). It is interesting to note that the Navajo have a song about the deer hunt which is a ritual song typically shamanic in character (Curtis 1968: 369), comparable with the Vogul song of the bear. The language of the Navajo, moreover, presents aspects which deserve study, above all from the point of view of the system of suffixes. Also very strange is the *hogan* (Curtis 1968: 348), their house, which seems to be the exact replica of the *mĕĝ-kat* of the Ostyaks. The Navajo Indians, who are considered to be the "Bedouin" of America, in the sense that they are shepherds and hunters of the prairies, although they are mixed with the Pima and the Zuñi, would appear to have the same life style as the Steppe communities of Asia, and possess a marked sense of decoration; they still produce objects of metal and materials in which the swastika is a dominant motif, as it was among the Voguls and the Ostyaks as well as the Indoeuropeans. It is true that the sphere of influence of the swastika is greater than that of shamanism, but we are still not in a position to determine the exact borderline between the shamanism of the Proto-Finno-Ugrians and the ritual practices of the Proto-Slavs.

The Kwakiutl, to permit the rebirth of dead salmon, do not burn their bones but throw them into the sea until their souls can once more return to them. The Otawa of Canada behave in the same way with all fish (Frazer 1963: 527). The Finno-Ugrians also do the same with the head of the bear which they bury very carefully. It is a question of the same idea of death-life in the two areas.

The practice of keeping the bones and the skeletons of dead animals among the peoples of Siberia and Northern Europe (Paulson 1968: 451–457) can be compared with the dismemberment and the reduction to a skeleton of the shaman candidate before his rebirth (Heissig 1982: 302). From the popular songs of the Kwakiutl we learn that on the death of her baby, the mother prays for him to return and be born once more (Benedict 1974: 238). The same attitude with regard to the death of animals, considered as the anticipation of a rebirth, is reflected in their approach to the death of ba-

bies. The practices of the Eskimo shamans are recognized as being quite similar to those of the Siberian shamans. Ruth M. Underhill, à propos of the drum of the Eskimo shamans justly writes: "The drum was a special instrument of Arctic people, used all the way from Greenland to Finland" (Underhill 1965: 88). The drum has a fundamental role among all the tribes of Dakota, a long way to the south of Canada: its use is not only confined to the Arctic peoples, but to those of shamanic persuasion. Continuing about the shamans the anthropologist adds: "In the Northwest, men were encouraged to enter the trance state, perhaps influenced by the Siberians" (Underhill 1965: 94). It is very probable that this is true. Underhill notices other affinities between the spiritual world of the Eskimoes and of other Canadian Indians, when she notes: "The half man, the cannibal, and the giant-who-shouts-in-the-woods inhabit the forests of Siberia, Lapland, and Finland also" (Underhill 1965: 49).

The kind of animism found in North American Indian magic reminds us of that of Siberian and Finno-Ugric paganism, even if it assumes among each people particular connotations and expresses itself in those rules of behaviour which each individual culture demands. It is true that if a North American Indian sees in a vision a plant, an animal or an object, this becomes his protecting spirit. The Finno-Ugrians, on the other hand, are more inclined to consider as premonitions of the future those spirits which have appeared in visions, but there are cases of strange divine appearances in the form of multi-coloured birds, which are considered to be an exclusive privilege of the individual who has experienced them. Both for the Finno-Ugrians and the Indians of California, for example, a vision is the chief prerogative of the shamans, who can also be women: indeed, according to the Shasta, usually only women have this gift (Benedict 1974: 47). The vision is quite important for the North American Indians, and in their sleep or visions they put themselves into contact with the world of spirits: from childhood the Indian boy is initiated in lonely places in the forest where animals like the eagle, the bison and the bear appear to him and will help him throughout his life. The shaman candidate in his dreams learns of his future shamanic state and his vocation has particular manifestations of a psychological nature or at any rate of strange behaviour in infancy (Jacquin 1976: 89).

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Death and Funeral Practices in Finno-Ugric and North American Shamanism

The world of the dead of the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians is not always easily located: it can be found in an area full of light, such as the Radienaimo of the Lapps, or the Twelfth Heaven in certain myths of the North American Indians, or again in an isolated place such as that of the dead shamans of the Indians of the plains, or the Saivoaimo of the Lapps. The kingdom of the hereafter is also imagined under the earth as, for example, in certain Hidatsa tribes and numerous Finno-Ugric groups, or in the North where the atmosphere is equally dark and cold. The Kwakiutl, although they think that the world of the dead is subterranean, are nevertheless convinced that the ritual death of a novice who is about to enter the Society of the Batchbakualanutchsiwae, the "Cannibal of the Northern Edge of the World", takes place in the far off North (Müller 1962: 303–304, 306–309). Both the Finno-Ugrians and the Canadian Indians have the idea of the South and the South West as "the other country", the kingdom of the dead and the true origin of Man: the Voguls believe in the migration of the dead in the form of birds towards the South, under the guidance of Lunt-Oter, the "Chief Duckling" (Capacchi 1968: 152), whereas the Micmac look to the South West for their original homeland. The Narraganset believe that the souls of their ancestors live there too (Müller 1962: 227). The idea of a kingdom beyond the earth situated on the far side of a river in an unspecific area is shared by the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians: it is sufficient to think of the Finns or the Delaware Indians. The latter, more than other similar peoples, in their folklore describe the kingdom of the dead, called Manala to show that it is under the earth or Tuonela, i.e. the "abode beyond" (Comparetti 1944: 420–421): however it is surrounded by a "black river" (Lönnrot 1978: 236), which is often boiling. Among the Finns even the "cosmic mountain" is situated in the Northern country: the dead person reaches this place, after managing to climb it, only with the help of his own finger nails which have been cut when he was alive. The soul, after crossing this terrible river, arrives before the walls of Pohjola, which, even if it is not the land of the dead, can be considered as a more advanced development of the idea of the hereafter. To get to the other side of this river, the dead man uses a bridge made from the famous "Great Oak" which was felled by a mythological dwarf and was identified with the Milky Way (Toivonen 1946–47: 43, 75), which is called in the Finno-Ugric area the "Way of the Birds", i.e., the way of the dead who make for the hereafter in the form of birds. The Milky Way is called the "Path of the Wild Geese" especially by the Votyaks, and its meaning is likewise the "Path of the Dead". The same idea is found also in the Lithuanian area (Gimbutas 1967: 185). The flight which must be completed by the dead person has a parallel in that of the shaman who "astride his drum" can put himself in touch with the kingdom of the hereafter in trance. There is also a widespread belief among the Kwakiutl that the copper pole which crosses the three levels of the cosmos, i.e. the sky, the earth and the hereafter, is represented by the Milky Way, on which the gateway to the hereafter is found (Eliade 1984: 28): the dead have to travel along this road in order to reach the kingdom beyond the earth. In Tlingit mythology also the Milky Way is imagined as a long pole. On the other hand, both the Kwakiutl and the Sanpoil Indians believe that

the world of the dead is at the end of the Milky Way in the sky (Driver 1975: 419). According to the Pawnee, those who die through illness or were cowards arrive among the spirits of the South via the Milky Way (Lowie 1961: 186). The "cosmic tree" is not only closely connected with the worship of the dead, but becomes almost a means of transport for the soul of the deceased, both among the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians. That is why the kingdom of the dead is always situated either in the North or the South or in other places in an "upside down world" with respect to that of the living. The traditions of the Bella Coola in the sphere of the hereafter are interesting with regard to this: in their opinion, the spirits of the dead keep their heads down, the opposite of what happens on earth (Cocchiara 1981: 34–35). In the same way, when they wish to emphasize the connection between the "cosmic tree" and the death-prelude to life, the tree itself is represented as upside down, with its roots in the air, as we see in the Lappish imagination. We can also find this elsewhere, for example, in the Germanic sphere. According to shamanic ideas among the Finno-Ugrians and the North Americans, the dead live in an upside down world, but in the same way as those who live on the earth. To show that the world of the dead is a reflection of that of the living we can recall that even the criterion of selection in the hereafter exactly reproduces that of society on the earth: for example, just as a murderer among the Hidatsa is excluded from the community in life, so he is after death also and is forced to wander about endlessly in the hereafter (Washburn 1981: 73). The so-called "wandering souls" are often met in the Finno-Ugric area too. Either among the Finno-Ugrians or the North American Indians the idea of evil is scarcely developed, and morality and good social behaviour are often confused. Clearly, in the "upside down world" of the dead, characteristics opposed to those on earth can be distinguished; among the so-called opposites that occur in the life-death cycle we can number a few: hot-cold, red-black and earth-water (Hoppál 1980: 244). A significant fact emerges à propos the practice of certain North American Indian tribes of not only blackening the face, but also of not eating hot foods after the death of a relative (Jacquin 1976: 92). Red as a symbol of life is very ancient in origin: North European hunters in prehistoric times covered the dead with red ochre to favour an easy rebirth. In connection with this there is the custom among Finno-Ugric women of spitting the chewed red bark of the birch on the heads of men who had killed a bear as a sign of welcome. The importance of the sorb as a sacred tree seems to be connected with the colour of its berries; the Finnish goddess Rauni and the Lappish Ravdna can be correlated with the Swedish *rönn,* i.e. sorb (Paulson 1965: 227). Even when the kingdom of the dead is located in the bright sky, it can be differentiated from that of the living thanks to its different positions: thus the opposition of above-below is created, which distinguishes the world of the gods from that of men. According to the Ostyaks of Irtyš, to reach the hereafter situated in the sky, it is necessary to climb a little ladder or along a chain, from which the dead, sacred bears and the gods sometimes redescend to the earth (Van Gennep 1981: 131–132). In this idea the identification of the dead and ancestors with the gods is evident. The Uralic funeral practice of burying the dead on the far side of running water in an area generally imagined as cold, is to be traced back to the opposing hot-cold concept. According to the Northern Ostyaks the hereafter is situated at the mouth of the river Ob in the Glacial Ocean which is rarely illuminated by moonlight. The North American Indians too, in particular the Cherokee, think that the hereafter is reached across water: according to them rivers constitute the paths which lead to the kingdom under the earth, and springs are simply the entrances to such a kingdom. Just as for the Finno-Ugrians so for the North American Indians, such as the Cherokee, it is not easy for a dead person to enter the world of the dead and above all he must follow certain

rules (Mooney 1970: 240). In fact some of the Ostyak tribes believe that the soul of the dead person becomes as small as an insect or is transformed into an insect to disappear absolutely and so be able to reach the kingdom of the dead (Van Gennep 1981: 139). The "passage" of souls to the hereafter is preserved in a Vogul tale. We read there that souls must be introduced into a small crack in a rock where the sky and the earth meet: here are inserted seven layers of birds and seven layers of fisherman's nets. The hero, having reached this aperture in the form of a bird, and having crashed against the iron netting, breaks his wings, falls into the water, is transformed into a pike and is thus able to overcome the obstacles and reach the kingdom of the dead (Hoppál 1980: 258). The tale is in tune with the Finno-Ugric belief that considers the kingdom of the dead as a dark country inhabited by fish, frogs and snakes. The importance of the snake in shamanism is witnessed by its numerous manifestations on the shamanic drums of the Lapps, Ob-Ugrians and Tartars. In Western Europe the serpent near the "tree of the world" represents the guardian of the accesses to immortality (Eliade 1981: 302). In the idea of labyrinth (= *Asclepeion* = the sanctuary of the snake under the ground) the snake is present (Santarcangeli 1979: 210). The dragon in popular belief and in Finno-Ugric stories of magic is a hybrid creature, born from the fusion of a snake, with reference to the underworld hereafter, and a bird, with reference to the hereafter in the sky or in a far off kingdom (Propp 1981: 393). The dragon figure is to be found also in the world of magic of Eastern Asia and pre-Columbian America. The fact that in the Finno-Ugric area the "spirit shade" in the world of the dead becomes a fish is found either in the belief of individual person, as is clearly attested in a Votyak ballad (Corradi Musi 1982: 164), or in common tradition. We read in fact in the *Kalevala* that Väinämöinen rediscovers Aino, the girl he loves, after she has been transformed into a fish, that is after her death (Lönnrot 1978: 78–80). On the other hand, Vladimir Ja. Propp holds the view that the road to the other kingdom passes through water and through the mouth of a water dragon (Propp 1977: 286; Propp 1978: 190).

The idea of the human soul transformed into a bird, which is typically shamanic and Siberian, is put into a concrete form in the representations of the "tree of the world" on which there are numerous birds, that is the souls of those to be born. In the areas under examination the choice of the name for a new born child becomes important in so far as it must coincide with the name of the reincarnated person. To such an end, therefore, there exists a specific ritual of which traces can be found. Among the Finno-Ugrians it is often the oldest woman who calls together all the other women of the family and establishes the name of the dead person who is being reincarnated. In particular the Camas of the North West American coast, among the American Indians, preserve a record of the importance of the choice of name for babies (Lewis 1970: 31). The soul or the souls of the ancestor do not always introduce themselves into the newborn child at the moment of birth: among the Ob-Ugrians, for example, there is the widespread belief that babies are able to receive the souls only after their first teeth have come through (Bertani 1985: 141). Not only men but animals too live again but several taboos exist in the case of the latter at the moment of their being killed, especially if they have a totemic value. In certain cases the death of a newborn child arouses less fear in that it does not yet have a special role in the context of the tribe: this brings to mind in particular the custom of American Indian women of practising infanticide without difficulty in the case of epidemics or famine in that they believe in the swift return of the soul of the newborn child in a new baby. The forms of birds indicating the souls waiting to be brought back to earth by the shamans as children appear on one of the three trees, probably that of the sky, depicted on the costume of a Goldi shaman in

the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Similarly, according to the beliefs of the Bella Coola a large number of owls, i.e. the souls of men waiting to be reincarnated, are perched on the tree situated beyond the heavenly home, called Nusmata (Vastokas 1973–74: 130, 144). The tree-bird connection can be explained by the fact that traditions about vegetation and death are closely related in the shamanic field: the death of vegetation in winter is only a stage on the way to rebirth, exactly as the death of a human can be interpreted. This relationship is also met in several areas, such as that of the Slavs: it is sufficient to think of the funerals of mythical characters such as Kupala, which were celebrated in order to obtain fertility, or the practice which is widespread throughout Europe of burning the carnival puppet (Propp 1983). It seems that the poles of the North American Indians, symbolizing the "cosmic tree", were originally surmounted by a bird. Shamanic poles with a bird on the top, usually an owl, are quite important also in the secret shamanic Midewiwin Society of the Ojibwa. In the American Indian field the totem pole used to be erected near a tomb in honour of a dead man (Drucker 1963: 193–194). The motif of the pole with the bird is well known in Siberian shamanism.

When someone dies, either in the Finno-Ugric or North American Indian area, funeral practices are scrupulously followed, not only because of the fear of the "return of the dead" which forms part of the "collective unconscious", but also and above all because of the fear that the dead person will not succeed in overcoming the difficult tests which are necessary for the arrival in the hereafter. We may remember that the Voguls and the Ostyaks, throughout the entire period of the purification of the soul, take special care to honour the images, constructed to contain the souls of the dead, which they erected beside paths inside little raised receptacles. Special statues are dedicated to those who died a violent death or to those whose bodies can not be recovered (Bertani 1985: 142). We find both among the American Indians and the Finno-Ugrians a belief in a "double soul" – the soul which dies along with the body and the one that reaches the hereafter. The souls of sick people or of those who are asleep wander outside themselves and can be taken away, in the case of the American Indians to the hereafter, thus causing the death of the body (Müller 1962: 243–244). Similarly the Ob-Ugrians believe that a man has five souls, and a woman four; among the Sioux, the Mandan believe that a person has four souls, two of which combine to form the spirit in the world beyond the tomb. The third soul is connected with the place where the deceased lived on earth and it remains there while traces of its "passage" on the earth remain, while the fourth soul at times leaves the village, returning occasionally to frighten the tribe (Lowie 1961: 187). Even at the end of the last century the belief flourished in the North American Indian area of the possible intervention of the dead on the living: according to a Paiute prophet from Nevada, the dead can resuscitate and help their tribe to become masters of their lands once more (Gaddis 1982: 222). In the shamanic field, the fear of the "return of the dead" and the worship of the dead have a special significance: death is revered because without it there can not be a new life, but it is also feared because if it does not occur in the proper manner fatally serious disadvantages are caused in the family or even in the whole of the tribe. Death affects not only individuals but the whole family and the clan: it is advantageous collectively because it permits cycles of future existences, but can also be collectively evil if the deceased does not succeed in finding a new balance and avenges himself on the living. Both the Finno-Ugrians and the North American Indians have a stoic attitude to death and regard it as a public event. The passing away must occur according to the appropriate rules so that no infringement may occur; the deceased knows that the tribe will not forget him (Jacquin 1976: 91). The care taken with regard to the dead man con-

cerns both his immortal soul and his mortal body. In the Finno-Ugric area the soul which does not die resides in the majority of cases in the skull: for this reason the Ob-Ugrians are particularly careful about the skulls of their funeral images, covering them with stone or metal masks so that they can symbolically survive the destruction of the body (Dienes 1980: 93). On the other hand, in shamanism the head often acquires an oracular function: it is sufficient to recall the heads of the bears of the Ob-Ugrians, those of ancestral shamans of the Yukaghir or the dead North American Indian shamans.

Among the several magic ways to carry away the so-called "second soul" from its earthly habitat and thus help it to free itself of all contamination acquired in its old body before a new reincarnation, there is that of stopping it from finding the door of the house: to this end the Hungarians make the body leave not through the usual door but through an aperture in the wall. The same practice, but this time in a tent or a primitive form of dwelling, is adopted also by the North American Indian tribes, such as the Haida Indians (Van Gennep 1981: 136) or the Skungen Indians of Vancouver (Frazer 1983: 162) or other Indians of the plains (Lowie 1961: 100). A similar custom is found in the Scandinavian area (Turville-Petre 1964: 356); in Italy at Valceno in the province of Parma, there exists the "door of the dead man" and in Bergamo the "door of the dead" both of which are appositely made in the wall of the house for the exit of the dead person.

The fear that the dead may return to disturb the living is greater in the shamanic area immediately after the death of a person, when the body has not yet putrefied and the dead person may act like a vampire. The Magyar custom of burying the dead simply by wrapping them in a sheet, or the Pawnee practice of using straw mats, can be explained just by correlating them with the wish on the part of the living to facilitate the decomposition of the corpse. The Eastern Cheremis are not familiar with the existence of coffins, but put the dead in a shallow grave, lining it with leaves and planks, leaving a space where the head would go. The custom of not interring the dead is also substantiated by a Mordvinian funeral song (Szmirnov 1966: 248). The Vogul and Ostyak custom of putting the bodies of babies in holes in trees has a dual purpose: one is to make the body decompose quickly, and the other to facilitate the "passage" of the souls to the hereafter in so far as they are already on a tree, the symbol of the archetypal tree, the way which leads to the world of the dead. The Indians of the plains expose the corpse on the prairie on a platform covered with hides or branches, or they put it in a rock cavity; in the east they put it in a trench lined with skins, covering it with a mound of earth, trying to orientate it south west where the kingdom of the dead is situated and in this way assist the soul's journey (Jacquin 1976: 92). The American Indians of the North West usually put their dead on a scaffolding of poles and also in canoes, following a tradition to be found among the Lapps and Siberian Yakut tribes, which, to speed up the putrefaction of the body, placed it on the branches of a tree so as then to carry out the "second burial", which is familiar to the Finno-Ugrians, the Slavs, and the American Indians: identifiable traces of this practice are also found in certain areas of Western Europe (Gasparini n.d.: 64–137).

The connection between the boat and the dead can be attributed to the very old practice of burying the dead in boats, a practice to be found both in the Finno-Ugric and European areas: for the latter we refer to the boat used as a sarcophagus at Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge in Suffolk, or to the boat-coffins in vogue at the time of the Merovingians in Norway and Sweden (Wilson 1962: 46; Brøndsted 1976: 251). In fact many Ob-Ugrians place the body in a boat and then bury it: this symbolizes the descent of the boat and therefore of the soul along the river of Ob as far as its mouth,

where it comes into contact with the original ocean; there the soul of the dead man will take on the form of a bird (Capacchi 1968: 179).

On the basis of the archaeological excavations in the district of Perm it was noticed that almost all the tombs in the area of the river Kama had been reopened. The "second burial" is also testified to in North East Estonia; among the Erza Mordvinians, where it was mostly carried out on the fortieth day after death during the funeral service of farewell to the deceased (Gasparini n.d.: 108–111); among the Cheremis it occurred when they were accustomed to exhume the bones of the dead and sprinkle water on them in the event of a shortage of rain (Gasparini n.d.: 125). As to the American Indians the main centre of the "second burial" is that of Nootka in Vancouver between the Kwakiutl and the Salish of the coast; other centres can be found among the Tlingit, Haida and Wishram tribes (Gasparini n.d.: 112). The culture of La Jolla in California, which dates back to 5000 B.C., is characterized by the fact that certain corpses underwent a "second burial" after their bones had been disjointed (Snow 1979: 146). Among the ancient practices of the Hurons we must recall that of exhuming the dead every ten or twelve years, of reburying the bones washed by the women and of celebrating on that occasion a feast of the dead (Gasparini n.d.: 71, 104). In these practices the belief that life rises from the bones is quite clear and is exactly in accordance with the shamanic traditions of Siberia. Returning to the "second burial" among the American Indians, we may recall the practice of certain Nootka and Clayoquot tribes at this time of keeping the skull and conserving it in the home (Gasparini n.d.: 113): the skull was evidently regarded by them, just as it was by the Finno-Ugrians, as the seat of the immortal soul.

The similarities in the worship of the dead among the North American Indians and the Finno-Ugrians have their origins in their primitive relationship in far off times on Asian soil. There was contact, however, between these peoples and Indoeuropean tribes, as the research of Catherine A. Callaghan has shown in the similarity of the verbal system of the Miwok and the Indoeuropean languages (Callaghan 1974: 383–388). On the basis of this ancient relationship we can explain the spread of such phenomena as the "second burial" which was practised moreover by certain Germanic tribes. This is illustrated by the legend of Thorolf Clubfoot (Turville-Petre 1964: 355–357) who, after his death, behaved like a vampire simply because his body remained intact. Clearly, in the Finno-Ugric and North American Indian areas the traces of early shamanism are far more pronounced, particularly in their funeral traditions.

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